

Illusions of Permanence

by Dan Shipley

An illusion of permanence is the senior citizen of seventy-five negotiating for a thirty-year home loan. It is the combat soldier who *knows* nothing can happen to him because his “guaranteed-for-life” pen is still writing like new. It is the aging grandmother who exchanges her dignity for the “**fashion**” of miniskirts and gaudy paint. It is the wealthy farmer of Luke 12 who, shortly before his unexpected demise, was thinking in terms of “*many years*” while planning a future which did not include God. It is every Felix who seeks a more convenient season in which to obey the Lord. It is all who live as if they anticipated an almost indefinite earthly existence. Few escape the beguiling effects wrought by these illusions of permanence.

But the Bible dispels these illusions. God describes man’s earthly tenure in such terms as “*shadow*,” “*season*,” and “*vapor*” -- words calculated to discourage our feeling “*at home*” in the body. As One more concerned with our eternal welfare than with our earthly comforts and prosperity, He teaches that “*a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Lk. 12:15); that here we are but straying pilgrims without an abiding city (1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 13:14). David’s perspective is essential: “*Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am*” (Ps. 39:4).

However, many, though professing otherwise, seemingly prefer illusions to truth. They remind me of the merchant who erects a large and expensive neon sign to advertise his “**Going-Out-Of-Business**” sale -- you doubt that he is. Similarly, some who **talk** of preparing for eternity show big signs of planning to be in business on this old earth for “*many years*.” Investments of time, talents and resources reveal where one’s treasure is -- and his heart (Matt. 6:19-21).

The farmer’s illusions of permanence were shattered with these words: “*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee...*” The time of this day is best redeemed in remembering that “*this night*” is never far from any mortal.

-- via Plain Talk

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