

Things Don't Last Forever by Carl McMurray

"Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, thus says the Lord of Hosts, "return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds. But they did not listen or give heed to me," declares the Lord. "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?""

Zechariah 1:4-5

Wow. How clear is that? As God begins almost His last recorded communication with His people in the Old Testament He does not begin it like a letter from the apostle Paul. He does not commend them and address them with respect. He is tired of them. He has wrestled with them and forgiven them for centuries. Although we might note that the besetting sin of idolatry was cured in Israel by their captivity in Babylon, yet, Daniel's prayer at the end of the seventy year sentence indicates they still had never repented. God brought them back to their land simply because He said He would, not because they deserved it. He honored Himself in keeping His word, not them.

At the time Zechariah writes they have been living in their land once more for over a dozen years. They have built their city and their homes while the weeds grew up among the foundation stones of God's house. They have ignored His honor and His right of worship and they are almost out of time. He is tired of them and begins His prophecy with a sober warning, Do you think you're going to live forever?

A good question for us, I think. Do we think we're going to live forever? Do we think the cycle of repetitive sin will continue to be forgiven forever? Have we missed the major lesson of the old nation? Although we know God is merciful and forgiving and full of grace; have we convinced ourselves that it will NEVER come to an end with us? His patience will NEVER run out?

I'm led to think that our Father expects us to grow. Growth necessarily implies change. It is impossible to grow and remain the same in any endeavor. And this change is a directed effort, not a random one. He wants us to grow in the way that He directs us. Running the race implies progress over the course. Fight the battle implies strategic action against the enemy. Living our lives as if God is unimportant except on Sundays and failing to make real spiritual progress is a sad mistake. "...the prophets, do they live forever?"