

Dorian

A Treatise on Aging

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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Dorian

A Treatise on Aging

Dorian noticed the loss of that proverbial step. He noticed it years after he actually lost it. That was OK because it had been years since he actually needed it. He no longer played the game.

What bothered him more were the *visible* signs of aging.

To be sure they were subtle, at first. Hair, just a little, but hair in the drain. Bags, little bags, but bags under his eyes, nonetheless. Using a new notch on an old belt.

For while these sort of things didn't seem to mean much. People didn't say anything to him; they didn't treat him any differently. He felt the same.

But the signs, slowly, got more pronounced. His skin got a little duller. Now the lost step became an ache here, a pain there, and now these little aches and pains never really went away.

What was worse, now he started to notice the aging in others around him, others of the same age, more or less.

Worse than this, now he began to notice the aging in others much older, especially people he had known for a long time, from before they were old. So this is what happens—it's hard not to see it.

Worst of all were the famous people he didn't know at all. These were people he didn't see every day; but when he did see them it was almost shocking to see how they had changed. Why this person used to be so..., beautiful, handsome, cool..., and now look at him, her, THEM—it's happening to everyone!

Has it been ten years already? Twenty?!

Am I going to look like that?!

How fast does time fly?!

At first, of course, there was denial. This is unbearable; it cannot be happening. Don't think about it. Don't look too closely. Keep seeing yourself in (what you imagine was) your prime.

When time broke this down, there was resistance. You have to fight back. Exercise, diet, take care of yourself, turn back the clock. Maybe this helped, but not very much.

This led to resentment, anger, anger at life, anger at God, anger at *me*?

This was no good; there was no future in it.

Finally, Dorian thought things through. This is the way life goes, he thought. What faith teaches us about the grand purpose of life better be true, he hoped.

After all, what other hope does anyone have anyway?

Besides, all of us are the product of *other people's* aging. They came on the scene, had a job to do, completed their work on earth, and went to God.

With God there is no aging. We are forever young, we can't be injured, and we are much more beautiful than we ever were here.

It's best to live in hope, looking forward instead of looking backward.

And when you do look backward, look backward in gratitude, gratitude for many good things, and to see them as we are told to see them—as the treasury of information that helps us to imagine life with God. Look back to look forward.

Yes, for sure, it's OK to enjoy your life story,

and, in your private musings, or in the telling and re-telling of your stories, to re-live the best times of your life,

and this time around the adventure doesn't have to include the pain, or the fear,

or the fact that even in the best of times there was always something missing.

Better yet, admit that even in the best of times there was always something missing. See this fact of life as the truth that it is—we were made for life with God, nothing here will ever fulfill us; it's good we're going where we're going.

Look at life in the light of faith. That became the plan. See worldly things for what they are. Cling to nothing. Let go. Love.

Live life in accord with its purpose and you will live better. Prepare for the trip that is coming because it *is* coming whether or not you are prepared. And every day you live your faith you will be all the more prepared.

This is how Dorian came to live. He lived well. He died well. He found out that he had done well.

But he also found out that there was one thing he never knew.

He never knew how his aging looked to God.

He has seen his aging as a sign, actually *many* signs, of something lost. He accepted that with time he had gotten progressively less good-looking.

He did not understand that God saw his aging as a sign, many signs, of something gained. God saw his aging for what it is, *for what it is that matters*—the result of living, and learning, and growing toward Him.

Every lost hair—and every new hair that showed up where there was no hair before!—and every line on his face, and the changing color and complexion of his skin, were the outward signs of inward riches. So, too, was the weakness that was the accumulated cost of exertion.

Oh, it was not true that every sign that he was no longer young was equally a sign of something good

—a gray hair is one thing, a pot belly is something else—

and it was not true that every sign of aging signaled an equal amount of growth and future glory

—in some years he had grown more but it showed less—

but, taken as a whole, in the eyes of God, aging made Dorian more and more beautiful.

Too bad he had not learned to see this sooner.