NO GREEN BANANAS by Al Diestelkamp

I have a “friend” who occasionally suggests that I should not buy any green bananas. It’s his unoriginal way of reminding me that I am getting *really* old. Of course, the Scriptures do an adequate job of warning about the brevity and uncertainty of this earthly life. In Moses’ prayer-psalm we read, “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psa. 90:10).

It is good to consider the brevity of life. In a psalm of David he prays, “Lord, make me know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, you have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor” (Psa. 39:4-5). Job described his days as “swifter than a weaver’s shuttle” and his life as “a breath” (Job 7:6-7). In the New Testament, life is compared to “a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:14).

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is credited with the saying, “The young may die, but the old must!” In his preaching, my father slightly adapted this phrase by saying, “The old *must* die, but the young *may,*” reminding old and young alike that we have no promise of tomorrow; “today is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). Most all of us have known people younger than ourselves who have passed away seemingly prematurely.

There is another truth that we ought to consider. As far as this earth is concerned, we are in “the last days.” That is, there is no promise of future life on earth beyond the present. This has been true ever since Jesus ascended into heaven, ushering in the gospel age. Jesus had promised His disciples: “I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:2-3).

I am impressed that the apostle Paul wrote in such a way that leads one to believe that he expected Christ to come in his lifetime—or at least in that generation. In his first letter to the church in Thessalonica he speaks of “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15) and describes the “day of the Lord” coming “as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2), urging them to be watchful and sober (v.6). His words were so urgent that some of the Thessalonians were “shaken in mind…as though the day of Christ had come” (2 Thess. 2:2). It’s possible that some had quit working, having misinterpreted Paul’s words.

Despite the suggestion of my friend, I’m not reluctant to buy green bananas; but I get the message: Because I’m old, unless the Lord comes soon, I’m going to die. Until then, whether young or old, *we* that are alive until the coming of the Lord should be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:13)—and living accordingly.