

Faithfulness in the Days of Your Youth While There Is Still Time

Galatians 5:22; Ecclesiastes 12:1

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The wisdom of many in the world (and sadly of many professing Christians) lays out the course of your life in this way. **While you are young**, sow your wild oats, have fun, and pursue your heart's dreams. **During your middle years**, settle down and get serious about marriage, family, work, and preparing for retirement. **During your elderly years**, make your faith a priority because death is quickly approaching. However, God says (in so many words), "Don't wait until you are old to take God seriously and to live your life for him; "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." This is not a matter to be put off until it is convenient, dear children and young people. There is nothing more important in life than remembering your Creator, trusting Him, loving Him, and in faithfulness obeying Him (Mark 8:36-37).

As we continue our study of the fruit which God produces in the life of every Christian (from Galatians 5:22), we continue to apply the fruit of faith or faithfulness to our calling and duties within our own family. Having applied the fruit of faithfulness to husbands, wives, fathers and mothers, we now come to you children and young people. Does God care whether you are faithful in your family or not? Does God give you a free pass to act and behave as you please just because you are young? Dear children and young people, you are addressed by the Lord as members of Christ's Church (along with your parents), and in the next couple sermons, I pray you will listen closely and apply what God says to you from His Word about being faithful to Him (in this sermon) and faithful to your parents (in the following sermon).

The main points from our text in Ecclesiastes 12:1 are these: (1) Remember Your Creator While You Are Young (Ecclesiastes 12:1a); and (2) Remember Your Creator before Old Age and Death Hinder You (Ecclesiastes 12:1b).

I. **Remember Your Creator While You Are Young (Ecclesiastes 12:1a).**

A. The Holy Spirit speaks through King Solomon in the text before us with an admonition to those of you who are young not to waste your younger years upon yourself (for all of that will vanish and perish), but rather to invest your younger years in remembering and serving God (for that alone will endure for all eternity).

1. King Solomon can speak to us all from a wealth of experience about wasting valuable years on oneself. King Solomon was the wisest mere man that has ever lived (according to 1 Kings 3:12). And yet Solomon departed from the Lord and wanted to do what he wanted to do because he wanted to do it. He experienced all that the world has to offer: untold riches, worldwide fame, the greatest political leader at that time, the most beautiful women at his grasp, massive building projects to the memory of his name, the writer of hundreds of proverbs and songs, and a most learned teacher in natural science. He set his heart to enjoy life to the fullest, but in his pride he thought he could enjoy life to the fullest apart from God being his first love. What is it in your life that leads you away from Christ, your first love? Is it your work, your financial status, your education, your family, the pleasures of life, the cares of this life, or the fears of this life (including the fear of death)?

2. King Solomon tells us from his own personal experience so that especially you children and young people will learn and not waste the early years of your life by investing primarily in yourselves and your own dreams to the exclusion of God, or putting the Lord on the shelf of your life (like a photo) to whom you can give a glancing look and a nod as you pass by and as you live your lives and your dreams in the way

that pleases you, rather than living your lives for Him in the way that pleases Him. Solomon says it is vanity (it is like a vanishing mist) to place your hope in this world, for it is passing away (and that becomes even clearer the older we become).

3. Though Solomon is specifically addressing those who are young, let us not think that any of us are thereby exempt from these words of wisdom. The biblical terms for youth and young stretch all the way from childhood to early adulthood (even Timothy who was an adult in his 20s or 30s and was a minister of the gospel who labored with the Apostle Paul is called a “youth” in 1 Timothy 4:12). And for those of us who have moved beyond our 20s or 30s (and maybe so far beyond that we have a difficult time remembering those years), we should not ignore the words of Solomon, for if Solomon’s words of wisdom are true for those who are young, how much more true for those of us who are even closer to poor health in aging years and closer to death itself.

B. Solomon (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) does not give us a suggestion, but rather issues a command (an imperative): “Remember” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Don’t forget because you become too busy. Don’t neglect this duty because you are having too much fun doing other things or pursuing your own dreams. Here is a command to remember.

1. Dear children and young people, how easy it is for you (and us all) to forget. You don’t have to go out and intentionally forget. You don’t have to hate and despise what it is that you are called to remember. All you have to do is to allow yourselves to become so preoccupied with other concerns, business, or pleasures, and soon you will forget what you were commanded to remember. Just as you do not have to sow weeds in your garden in order to see it infested and overcome with weeds. All you have to do is to forget that the garden needs to be weeded regularly, and soon the flowers, shrubs, or vegetables will be choked out due to the spread and growth of weeds. So likewise, you do not have to set out to forget what it is to be remembered.

2. The chief reason why the older generation of Israel were destroyed by God in the wilderness, after having been so miraculously rescued from Egyptian bondage and protected by God was that they forgot God, ignored God, and neglected God instead of remembering Him in faith, love, and thankful obedience (according to Deuteronomy 32:18). Dear children, young people and adults alike, how shall we likewise escape, if we neglect, ignore, or forget the God who created us? What Solomon commands to be remembered is so important that no excuses we make will be judged acceptable if we forget. This is a matter of life and death.

3. To remember God our Creator does not speak of a mere mental recollection that God exists and made all things.

a. The command to remember in Ecclesiastes 12:1 is not like remembering a mere historical fact: George Washington was the first president after the Constitution was adopted. This cannot be how you remember God. There is no relationship in such remembering. Rather the command to remember in Ecclesiastes 12:1 is like the remembering you have of someone very close and familiar to you. When I see a photo of my wedding (there with my bride), it’s not just remembering a historical fact that I was married, it is a remembering that is very personal—a remembering that stirs of love, joy, and thankfulness. It is a remembering that affects my whole life. So is the remembering God as your Creator. That kind of remembering of your Creator affects what you say with your tongue, what you listen to with your ears, what you watch with your eyes, where you run to with your feet, what sites you visit with your hands, and what you think with your minds. When you truly obey this command to remember, it will affect the doctrine you profess and the practice of that doctrine in your life (Exodus 20:8).

b. Dear children and young people, when there is fear in your lives, is it not because you have forgotten the power and might of your Creator? When you exhibit the lusts of the flesh, is it not because you have forgotten that your Creator sees all, that sin is committed in His very presence, and that

you are united to Christ by faith in His death and resurrection? When you sinfully speak against God, against His providence, or against your neighbor, is it not because you have forgotten that God governs all things for His own glory and for the good of His people? Dear children and young people, to forget God is to think and act as if He does not exist, or does not care what we do in our lives. It is to be a practical atheist.

C. Second, dear children and young people, what is commanded to be remembered is “thy Creator” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Quite literally, the Hebrew text states, “thy Creators” (in the plural), which is an intimation of the three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity (just as we see in Job 35:10 and as we see in the plural pronouns used in Genesis 1:26). How are you to remember the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as your Creator?

1. **REMEMBER** that He made you and not you yourself (Psalm 100:3; Psalm 139:14). Consider for a moment your brain, an absolutely astounding wonder of God’s creation.

a. Three weeks after conception brain cells begin to form. They grow in spurts, at times up to 250,000 cells a minute. After birth the brain continues growing and forming its network of connections. In time, about 100 billion nerve cells, called neurons, as well as other types of cells, are packed into a human brain.

b. It is estimated by researchers that 100 million bits of information pour into the brain every second from the various senses. In the brain stem, all this information is sorted out by a “traffic controller” called the reticular formation.

c. Astronomer, Carl Sagan, stated that the brain could hold information that “would fill some twenty million volumes, as many as in the world’s largest libraries” (*Cosmos*, 1980, p. 278). The human brain is truly a miraculous creation of God. The chances that the human brain just happened by pure chance without the design and plan of the Triune Creator is akin to saying that the computer on your desk, or your iPhone came into being by mere chance, or that twenty million volumes in a library just evolved over time.

d. Stanford News (April 28, 2014): “Stanford bioengineers have developed a new circuit board modeled on the human brain, possibly opening up new frontiers in robotics and computing. **For all their sophistication, computers pale in comparison to the brain.** The modest cortex of the mouse, for instance, operates 9,000 times faster than a personal computer simulation of its [the mouse’s] functions” (<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2014/april/neurogrid-boahen-engineering-042814.html>). Remember God made you. Therefore, you are to offer your life to Him as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

2. **REMEMBER** that your Creator is also man’s Preserver. Therefore, nothing happens by accident in this universe or in the life of any of us. You are sustained every moment of the day because your Creator provides for your needs. Thus, you are to joyfully express to Him continually your thanksgiving for all that you have and to be content with what the Lord gives you or does not give you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

3. **REMEMBER** that your Creator is also man’s Savior through faith alone in Christ and His perfect obedience alone. We are all sinners in Adam who have also transgressed God’s law in thought, word, and deed (Romans 3:23). We deserve God’s everlasting wrath and condemnation. However, out of His undeserved kindness and mercy, God redeemed sinners chosen in Christ before the world began through the perfect obedience, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, and freely applies that redemption to sinners (even to the chief of sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15), so that none may boast or take any glory to himself/herself, but rather give all glory to God alone (1 Corinthians 1:29-31). As you pass through the many afflictions, trials, and tribulations of this life, you are to cling to Christ not only for your justification, but also for your sanctification. God uses even the trials, afflictions, and temptations of this life to make you yearn for Him and your heavenly home, wherein you shall be perfectly conformed to the holy image of our dear Savior. Dear children and young people, love and desire not only the mercy and grace of God, but also love and desire the holiness of God.

4. **REMEMBER** that your Creator is also man's Judge, before whom we will all appear on that Last Day. None will be able to escape His all seeing eye. All of us will give an account before the Lord as to what we have done in these bodies (whether good or bad, 2 Corinthians 5:10). On that day, you will either stand before this just Judge pleading your own righteousness and goodness (which is unacceptable because of sin) or pleading the righteousness of Jesus Christ as your own by faith alone (which alone is acceptable). Do you seek to live (whether in secret or in public) in the presence of God before whom you will stand on that Last Day? To truly remember as God commands here through Solomon is an act of God's free grace and not something in which you can boast.

D. Third, note when it is commanded that we are to remember: "in the days of thy youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The Creator is to be remembered while you are young, rather than to be remembered whenever you feel like it, as if it was no big deal or as if it was something that could wait until you are older. There is nothing more important!

II. **Remember Your Creator before Old Age and Death Hinder You (Ecclesiastes 12:1b).**

A. Dear ones, there is an urgency to this command that is like a siren that sounds a warning to everyone that an emergency exists. Now is the time to be watchful and vigilant—not later when you think it might be more convenient and comfortable for you. For if you wait to remember this command, you may never have an opportunity again to remember what Solomon here commands. The longer you wait to remember your Creator, the more you are likely to forget Him and to become mired in your busy, self-seeking, pleasure-oriented world that preoccupies you.

1. Dear children and young people, when you seek your own ways and turn from seeking the ways of the Lord, God gives you over to the desires of our own heart, just as He did with Israel of old in the wilderness. They were not content with God's mercies to them, so God delivered them over to their own fleshly desires (Psalm 78:17-29; Numbers 11:5-6).

2. Therein we learn the hard way that our sinful desires, which we thought would make us so happy, only end up leading us into greater misery. And if God grants us repentance, we will learn through our own foolishness and misery the vanity of a life lived apart from Jesus Christ. Solomon knew this from his own experience, and he seeks to spare us the same bitter lessons.

B. Solomon gives us the reason why you are not to delay remembering every day your Creator—because there will come trials, busyness, burdens, afflictions, cares of this life, goals and ambitions, and eventually death that will tend to occupy your thoughts more than your Creator.

1. The heartaches of life, the pains of this world, the sorrows and tears of broken relationships will come in like a mighty tidal wave and will sweep away your mind from the Lord. That is what is meant by "evil days", i.e. days of trial, heartache, and affliction in which you will find no comfort or hope in a world that is fading away, and circumstances that seem to have no meaning or purpose in them apart from God.

2. That is what the figurative language in Ecclesiastes 11:2-7 is depicting—the final end of death itself. We cannot escape it. We cannot ignore it and make it go away. The grave awaits us all. In light of that certain truth, how then should we live in this present life? Since none of us knows when we shall breathe our last breath, we must live our lives as if today was our last day, as if today our body should be placed into the ground to await the final resurrection, and as if our soul should be taken from these mortal bodies to appear before the holy God who made us. Only those who carefully prepare for death and the judgment to come by remembering their Creator, embracing Christ by faith alone, and making Christ their life and reason for living will know the joy of the Lord and a peace that passes all understanding in this life and at death.

You children and young people are here addressed by Solomon not to think that you can please yourself with all of the pleasures of life now, and then sometime before you die, you can make everything right with God, your Creator. Many have had the same idea, but never were granted repentance by God before they died and passed into an eternity without Christ. Dear ones, it is a lie of the devil, cunningly crafted and suggested to you that you can delay trusting Christ, delay repenting of sin, delay making Christ your life. Commit yourselves to the Lord, take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Him. It is not easy to take up that cross and to show forth the death of Christ in your life and to have your sins and lusts put to death on that cross. It is not comfortable to deny yourself the things in this life that you want for your own pleasure and to follow Christ, especially in suffering for Him and with Him. Therefore, remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

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