

REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR

By Benjamin J. Williams

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; [2] While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: [3] In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, [4] And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; [5] Also [when] they shall be afraid of [that which is] high, and fears [shall be] in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: [6] Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. [7] Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Ecc. 12:1-7).”

This poetic passage describes in metaphors the certain passage of time and its affects on the physical body. The “evil days” are not days of immorality but days of sorrow and hardship which cause us sometimes to say that we have no pleasure in this life any longer (v. 1). As the years go by, the glory and pride of youth are darkened and the storms of turmoil pass over our heads time and time again (v. 2). Strength fails, teeth decay, and eyesight diminishes (v. 3). The voice is “brought low” and loses its strength (v. 4). The young boy that used to climb trees is “afraid of that which is high” and his hair turns white like the almond tree in bloom (v. 5). The simplest inner workings of the body decay like a loosed cord and a broken pitcher (v. 6). Finally, mortal man reaches the end when the “doors are shut in the street” and “man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about in the streets” in a funeral procession. The body returns to dust and the spirit to God.

No matter how strong or energetic the physical body may be in youth, the natural processes of this universe bring it to an end similar to that described by inspired Solomon. The Psalmist says, “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. (15) As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. (16) For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more (Psalms 103:14-16).” Whether you be an unknown servant or Alexander the Great, all people of all manner of stature and all varieties of prestige and power throughout all of human history have met the same end. The dust of powerful mens’ bones mingles with all the rest.

In our text, Solomon begs young people to foresee the universal truth of man's mortality. Youth is the most difficult time to recognize the frailty of our own lives, so Solomon gives the young of every future generation a look into their own future. This fact of our mortal nature demands a question: If this life is void of hope for the physical body, for what purpose should I live? Or, can I avoid a hopeless death? The answer is given in verse one of our text and the title of our lesson – Remember Now Thy Creator!

The Young Have a Duty

If you are young today, most of the sullen images of our text are not yet upon you. Instead, you are blessed with a healthy body able to serve God in many ways. Many would like to think that youth is a time to “live it up” and have a “good time” before old age catches up. First of all, realize that most of the immoral pleasures available to you only hasten the destruction of your life. Besides the consequences to your soul, alcohol and harmful drugs damage your physical body, and you only get one such body for the rest of your life. It is one of the countless blessings the Creator has given you. Therefore, your duty is to take that body and use it in the service of God.

Similarly, the marriage body is honorable creation of God. “Marriage [is] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:4).” High school and college culture encourages abstinence from marriage and indulgence in fornication. Youth is not a time to indulge the lusts of the flesh before mature life catches up to you. It is a time to remember the glory of the Creator and His moral precepts. Youth is not a time to defile the body. It is a time to prepare it for the Masters service.

Young Examples

The Bible provides several examples of the young serving their God. Recall David marching out to meet the Philistine giant. “And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou [art but] a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. ... [37] David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee (1 Samuel 17:33, 37).” David recognized two important points. First, when an adversary stands to fight the army of God, it is the duty of every person of every age to rise to the challenge. Second, your skills and abilities are secondary in importance to the God who fights on your side. Because God shows men how to serve Him, they can be fruitful in their service without great amounts of personal ability.

Jeremiah was a young man commanded to preach the truth to a people who hated to hear it. He was told by Jehovah “... to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant (Jeremiah 1:10).” Jeremiah did not at first believe he was up to such a task and the book of Jeremiah records his plea: “Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I [am] a child. [7] But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I [am] a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. [8] Be not afraid of their faces: for I [am] with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 1:6-8).” Despite Jeremiah's concerns over his age, God commanded him to do his duty and promised to help.

Even if you are not concerned about your age and how it might affect your ability to serve God, others often are, as in the case of David and Saul. Timothy was given instruction by Paul to “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).” Even if opposed in his service, Timothy, like young David, was to march into battle against the adversaries of God.

Maturity Through Proper Practices

To be better servants of God, the young must grow as individual Christians. Failure in this regard gives the church in future generations an unstable, immature leadership. Parents, the local congregation, and the youth all need to make efforts toward maturity.

Young people need to practice simple habits that lead to maturity. Prayer teaches the principle of dependence on God as the Giver of all blessings (James 1:17). The command to “Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17)” explains that prayer should be a habit practiced as often as possible. Prayer is not a meaningless routine performed by children to please Mom and Dad. It is the privilege bestowed upon the Saints by our High Priest, Christ Jesus.

I once liked to take paper and pen to worship to draw pictures during the sermon. I remember my Dad telling me that one day I would want to become a Christian, but I wouldn’t know how because I didn’t pay attention to what goes on in the worship assembly. The Bible tells us to be attentive to the examples before us. In addition, we need to study the Bible to discover what the Creator demands of us. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).” The young must be preparing their minds to serve Christ by filling their minds with the knowledge of God’s word. Parents and the local congregation need to provide solid spiritual food to nourish the young. Too often we use cute stories and games to feed the High School age children of the congregation, when they need substance taken from God’s word. They need Scripture, not stories. They need the Gospel, not gimmicks. They need doctrine, not dramas.

The Modern Youth Problem

Today, there is a large trend to give youth what they want and not what they need. It is a fine case of trying to keep up with our denominational neighbors. The local denominations have youth groups that do fun, worldly activities that lure our children away. In response, we feel compelled to create fun, worldly activities to compete. Please remember: the work of the church is never worldly!

Consider the scenario of many congregations today. They single out the youth and title them a “youth group”. The Bible teaches over and over again that the church is one body built in unity, but rather than having the young and old learn to enjoy each others company and give the youth real spiritual role models, we separate them out so that they can have a good time. The Bible teaches that the older men and women are to teach the younger in the ways of God (Titus 2:1-8), but they never get the opportunity in many congregations to spend time exhorting the young. Instead, congregations hire a youth minister to play games with the young under the cloak of occasionally ministering to the spiritual needs of the local youth. It is overlooked that the youth minister is a

young man himself, usually just out of college. Why do we think it reasonable to take the most spiritually immature member of the local congregation and put him in charge of providing leadership to our children? The answer: he is more fun and enjoyable than the older, mature members of the congregation.

The sad story doesn't stop there. The denominations are still ahead of the game. They use exciting worship songs tailored to fit the wants of young people, so we have to keep up. We wouldn't dream of using inappropriate songs in our worship (Eph. 5:19), but many justify using such songs in Vacation Bible School. There, children are taught to clap, stomp, and yell at the top of their lungs about Jesus. We must be aware that someday these children grow up, and they have to wonder why clapping and stomping was okay before but not when they are older. A lot of the unscriptural worship practices in the church today started when parents taught their children to worship like Pentecostals in VBS and at "church camps".

The church in many places is too busy trying to lure children away from the world by using worldliness. Face the fact: the Devil is better at being worldly than the church is! If we try to keep up with the denominations at their own game, we will be forced to join their ranks. Sadly, this is exactly where many of our brethren are heading. The church grows by spiritual warfare, not worldly gimmickry.

Brethren, let's stop teaching our children things that we have to "unteach" them later. Don't teach them that they have to be around people their own age to survive. Teach them to admire and appreciate Christians of all ages (Titus 2:1-8). Don't teach them that the church exists to cater to their worldly wants. Teach them that Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Don't teach them to worship in vain. Teach them to worship in spirit and in truth from their youth up (John 4:24). Don't teach them to keep up with the denominations. Teach them that the church is "... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9)".

What Young People Need

The world tells us that young people desperately need other young people to have fun and grow as Christians. The Bible conspicuously doesn't mention that supposed pressing need. The Bible does say that the young of every congregation need the very same thing. They need the very same things that adults need, just in different measures. They need truth and fellowship with people of any age that love the truth. To get truth, they need to be taught the truth from reliable versions of the Bible. They do not need little pieces of the truth. They need the tools to be mature. Maturity is being complete, and you don't become complete when you are denied access to spiritual nourishment.

They need "... all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27)." God has commanded the young to remember him now, in their youth, and He has told them how in His word. Therefore, the young must be encouraged to study, they must be fed from the pulpit and classroom, and they must be shown the truth in the home. They need to take "... the whole armour of God" so that when temptations come their way, they do not have to cower but can "... withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:13)." Having the whole armor of God requires that there be no unguarded place. To keep them girt about with the truth, they need to be shown that the Bible is the source for truth. To keep them protected by the breastplate of righteousness, teach them God's moral principles, even the hard ones. Don't let the world teach them about sex over the lunch

table before you have shown them God's law in the home. Don't let worldly influences teach them ethics before you show them God's standard. To keep them walking right, teach them how to walk in the gospel of peace. To give them a strong shield of faith, prepare them to answer the accusations of atheists, evolutionists, and destructive critics of the Bible. To save their souls from death, teach them how to wear the helmet of salvation through belief, repentance, confession of the name of their Lord, and baptism. To keep them safe and strong, show them how to wield, not yield, the sword provided by their Creator.

Don't assume that a child is too young to learn anything really important. Even in youth, the mind is able to comprehend and remember much more information than you might think. Even before they are old enough to put all of the pieces together, they can start sorting and storing the information they need to obey the gospel. Remember the basic rule: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Pro. 22:6)."

Remember Now Thy Creator

Many young people march off into their lives unprepared to face the wiles of the Devil. Do not forget that the Devil is very good at what he does. The child unprepared to serve God is a child prepared for destruction in the service of Satan. The world will tell him how to live if you do not. Every nightclub billboard and every neon bar sign tells the young how to live in the service of Satan. If the young are to learn how to serve their Creator, it must be parents and the church that do it.

Young people, realize that God has given you a duty as well. It is the command to remember. When you go to school or work, remember that there is a God who created all, who sent His Son, and who has a law for you to live by. Remember in your Bible classes that someday it will be your time to teach those classes and that you must be collecting the knowledge to do it. Remember in the worship assembly that someday you will need to provide faithful leadership and attendance in those services. Remember when the local congregation makes a decision, that someday you may be involved in making those decisions and now is the time to learn how. Remember that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: (Heb. 9:27)." Someday the time will come that you will have to give an answer to your Creator and Judge for every idle word and every action of your life (Matt. 12:36). Now is the time to prepare for that day. Now is the time to remember thy Creator.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man. [14] For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether [it be] good, or whether [it be] evil (Ecc. 12:13-14)."