

Remember Your Creator

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

Ecclesiastes 12:1 - *“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”*

Background Notes

At the end of Ecclesiastes 11 Solomon once again concluded that we can live a joyous life - even though we don't know all the details about the future, including fortune or misfortune, and even though we know that life is short and will involve problems and trials. In fact, God intended a joy to be the norm for the life He has given us. It's not the norm to go through life feeling miserable and discouraged and anxious. No, God intends us to experience joyful living!

BUT, Solomon emphasized, while we can live joyously, we must live responsibly. We must put the Lord first in our lives, and we must recognize that the decisions and choices made in this life will be reviewed and judged by the Lord Himself. Look at the end of verse 9 of chapter 11: *“But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.”*

At the beginning of chapter 12, a third big “BUT” is in view. In our joyous living, we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth. “Remember” here does not just mean to know and call to mind some facts about God. No, “remember” means to be aware of God's continual presence, and to remember to obey Him and serve Him.

Why should we remember our Creator specifically in the days of our youth? Here are two reasons:

1. It's a safeguard against taking joyous living to the wrong extreme. Solomon's advice in chapter 11 to take advantage of your youth, and to enjoy pleasant activities before you get too old, does **not** condone self-indulgence!

2. Life is short. If you don't remember your Creator in your youth, will you ever remember your Creator? Before you know it you'll be old, and you'll no longer be able to use your entire life for the Lord.

So, to emphasize the limitations of old age, Solomon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, employed three vivid figures to describe the coming of old age.

Doctrinal Points

1. Remember your Creator before the storm gathers.

Verse 2: *“While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars, are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain.”*

In Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 Solomon likened life to light, and death was likened to darkness. In verse 2, he made the same contrast: light for life and darkness for death. Old age is pictured as a gathering storm. In fact, it appears that Solomon’s idea was to liken approaching death to a series of recurring rainstorms. At first you’re able to bounce back from any ailment - the sun comes out again after the rain. But as you get older, the clouds return with increasing frequency. The sun and moon and stars are hidden as the storms gather. There’s less time or ability to bounce back. Your abilities and strength and opportunities to serve the Lord are limited.

So, while the sun is still shining and you’re still physically able, use the opportunities the Lord gives you to serve Him!

Remember your Creator before the storm comes.

2. Remember your Creator before the mill shuts down.

Verses 3-4: *“In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down; when the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim; ⁴ when the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of grinding is low; when one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low.”*

In these verses, old age is likened to an old house. Specifically, it seems that it’s viewed as a public mill house because there’s a mention of both a house (v3) and a grinding mill (v4). It appears to be a mill house that is no longer as active and vibrant as it once was, and it no longer serves the people by grinding their grain.

Why is the mill shutting down? Because those who run the operation are getting so old that they tremble. The strong men who used to carry and lift the sacks of grain are bent over, and the strong grinders are few. They’re sitting around, idled by age.

It doesn’t take much insight to see that the various features of this metaphor represent the aging parts of our bodies. Our arms and legs grow weak and tremble. Our teeth no longer “grind” or chew our food properly, and we’re missing many teeth. (Remember, this was before the day of false teeth.) The windows (eyes) are dimmed. The doors to the street are closed, perhaps a reference to the closed mouth when the front teeth are gone. The rest of verse 4 probably illustrates the loss of hearing and insomnia in old age.

Remember your Creator before the mill shuts down.

3. Remember your Creator before the equipment fails.

Verses 5-6: *“Also they are afraid of height, and of terrors in the way; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets. ⁶ Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well.”*

The wording of our doctrinal point comes mainly from verse 6 - the bowl of a hanging lamp falls and breaks because the silver cord that held it deteriorated and finally broke. In verse 6, the other equipment that fails is a shattered vessel for holding well water, but also the entire wheel apparatus for drawing the water out of the well also fails.

As we age, our natural equipment for living life gradually begins to fail. We no longer climb trees to cut branches or climb ladders to clean leaves out of our gutters because we have become afraid and wary of heights. What hair we have left has turned white, like almond blossoms. We inch along like grasshoppers. The caper berry (which was a sexual stimulant in those days) is no longer effective. Human equipment fails as the body moves towards its “eternal home,” and the funeral march approaches (v5).

These are depressing and unpleasant thoughts, to be sure, but they are all too true. Therefore, remember your Creator before the equipment fails.

Practical Applications

1. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth by memorizing Scripture.

In verse 1 we are commanded to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. One way to obey this command is to memorize Scripture. A Scripture memorization program forces you - in a good way - to remember your Creator.

It's especially important to memorize Scripture when you're young, for several reasons:

a. You usually have a greater ability and capacity to memorize Scripture when you're young. When you get older, it's generally harder to memorize. Most of the Scriptures I know by heart now, I memorized when I was young.

b. The Holy Spirit can bring appropriate scriptures to your mind at the appropriate times. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.” In the context, this promise was made specifically to the disciples who were about to receive the Holy Spirit, but it can certainly be applied to all Christians today because the Holy Spirit indwells us. However, the Holy Spirit cannot bring Scripture to our thoughts if it's not already in our minds. One way to get Scripture into our minds, so that the Holy Spirit can use it in our lives, is to memorize Scripture.

c. *You are less likely to sin, and more likely to walk in the will of the Lord.* In Psalm 37:31, David said about the righteous person, *“The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slip or slide.”* And Psalm 40:8 say, *“I delight to do your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.”* And there is that well-known verse in Psalm 119:11, *“I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”*

Timothy must have memorized Scripture in his youth, because that the apostle Paul said to him, *“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 3:15).

In Luke 2:52, we read that the Lord Jesus as a boy, *“increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”* This growth in wisdom surely must have included the memorization of large portions of Scripture. That was typical of godly young Jewish men in that day. How can we do less than follow our Lord’s example?

Parents and grandparents, encourage your children and grandchildren to memorize Scripture – and it’s not wrong to reward them for doing so! Remember your Creator in the days of your youth by memorizing scripture.

2. Stay young for your Creator.

Verse 7: *“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”* When we die, our bodies return to dust. Our spirits, on the other hand, return to God for judgment. From the rest of Scripture, we know that unbelievers will be judged on the basis of their works, and they will be in hell forever. (See Revelation 20.) Believers will be with the Lord forever in Heaven, and we will be rewarded on the basis of our service and faithfulness to the Lord. No wonder we’re told to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, so we can get an early start on serving the Lord all our lives!

Don’t think, “Well, I want to serve the Lord, but I’m very busy right now. I’ll wait until I get older to be active for the Lord.” I can’t think of a worse scenario for aging Christians than to realize, in later years, that their energy is gone, and it’s too late to use their strength and energies for the Lord.

It’s clear that we should not waste the prime years of our lives, and that we should, as much as possible, “stay young” for the Lord. Don’t become a couch potato. Don’t let your body go to waste (and maybe we should spell that “w-a-i-s-t.”)

Stay active and fit, not for vanity or self-glory, but for the Lord’s use! Stay “young at heart” by keeping your mind active and your creative juices flowing. Stay young for your Creator!