

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (35)

Rejoice, In Your Youth

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1

We are coming to the close of our study of Ecclesiastes (3 lessons left). We have seen the wisdom of Solomon applied to life in virtually every area. We have seen the vanity of putting our trust in the ways of the world, to the neglect of God. Now, as Solomon concludes this letter, he does so with an admonition to the young. In the process of this he also addresses the aged. In this lesson, we want to examine Solomon's admonitions to youth, and in our next lesson we will look at the other side of this, what happens when we grow old? We will then conclude this study with Solomon's final admonition.

I. Youth –

a. A time of:

- i. Vibrancy and energy - Young people have their whole life ahead of them and have plenty of energy and strength.
- ii. Learning – it is during youth that most will develop their skills and knowledge that will carry them throughout their lives.
- iii. Where the rest of your life will be directed – it is during youth that you will begin to make decisions that will shape the direction you will go in your life. Careers chosen, finding a spouse, where you will live, and a host of other things.

b. A time of usefulness, even for God -

- i. Young people must not think, even for a moment, that they are not useful to God. The Bible has many examples of youth that accomplished great things – David, who as a young shepherd would deliver Israel by slaying Goliath, Josiah who began his rule at age 8, Timothy who from childhood knew the scriptures, Joseph, who because of his integrity would rise to power in Egypt and eventually deliver his family from a severe famine, AND Mary who would bring Jesus into this world. We could name many other young people in the Bible, but these stand out and remind us that even as a youth, you can be a useful to God.
- ii. We NEED our young people – in the church, we are foolish to ignore the young. They are needed for many of the above-mentioned reasons (strength, energy and even their knowledge – especially current things). They are the future of society **AND the church**. IF there is to be a church standing true to God's word in the next generation, it is going to be because we have shaped our youth to stand for truth.

II. Solomon's advice (11:9-12:1)

a. *Rejoice, O young man, in your youth*

- i. It is a time to have fun, make friends, enjoy your life. It is a time to play and learn the basic skills you will need throughout your life. Many of the toys and activities we have are designed to help develop skills and direction that can carry you through life (And there are those that ruin you as well). It is during youth that you can discover what you are good at. Youth should be somewhat carefree as you are just learning about yourself and the world around you.

It is tragic when a child is robbed of his youth because of a poor environment – maybe even circumstances beyond his control. While things happen, a child should not have to grow up before he/she is ready. NOTICE I did not say he does not need to grow up!

The Bible speaks of “childish things” and does not say they are wrong (1 Corinthians 13:11) WHEN you are a child. They are a part of learning.

- ii. ***Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes*** –
 1. Contextually, this is NOT saying to do anything and everything you want.
 2. We know there are many things that are wrong regardless of your age – 1 John 2:15-17 warns us about the lusts of the flesh, eyes and pride of life. Timothy was told, “Flee youthful lusts” 2 Timothy 2:22
 3. There are also commands one IS to keep, even in youth – Ephesians 6:1-2 calls for children to obey their parents, and to honor them. Proverbs 6:20-24 again reminds us to listen to our parents and let them keep us from going down the wrong path. Continually the proverbs warned about the foolish son who was a grief to his parents (Proverbs 17:25, 10:1, 19:13, etc.).
 4. BUT it is saying, do what you are able to do, using wisdom in the decisions you make, the places you go, and who you associate with.
- b. ***But know this, that God will bring you into judgment*** – we find here the standard warning that EVERYONE, young and old alike, needs to remember – there will be a day of reckoning. There will be a day of judgment and accountability – Acts 17:30-31, Romans 2:5-11 – are you treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation?
- c. ***Therefore, remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh***
 - i. HERE is the warning to be careful HOW you have fun. Do NOT get caught up in the evils often associated with youth. While it is not ALL youth, many during their youth engage in lustful, hateful and wild behaviors. This is true not only at home, but once they leave home (maybe even more so them). And many expect this and think it is normal. Have you ever heard someone say, “He needs to sow his wild oats”?
 - ii. What you do now is going to follow you the rest of your life. Habits will be formed, etc. The reckless decisions of those “wild oats” often lead to devastating consequences that affect the rest of one’s life – RUINED lives because of poor decisions made while young – criminal records, children out of wedlock, developed addictions that will haunt you, and possibly even bodily damage, either to you or others. Heed the warning of Paul in Galatians 6:7-8 – you will reap what you sow! Hosea 8:7 speaks of how they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. A message of judgment against Israel for their corrupt behavior.
 - iii. In life things happen, and at times they are beyond your control. BUT, much of the consequences we see in our society and in individual lives are things that could have been different if only one would have made wise decisions throughout their life.
- d. ***Childhood and youth are vanity*** –
 - i. ***Talk about a truth about vanity*** – here is an example of why trusting in this life is vanity. Because you will see it happen as time goes on. Your youth is going to pass! And that is what our next lesson will address in chapter 12.
 - ii. BUT also understand that during youth, no matter how much you think you know, you are STILL inexperienced and therefore vulnerable!
 - iii. How many in later life look back with regrets wishing they had listened to their parents more? OR been more responsible? Or had put forth greater effort to grow spiritually/
- e. ***Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth***
 - i. This IS THE OTHER caveat for enjoying life while young – know about judgment, and remembering God.
 - ii. Notice also how Solomon described God here – “your Creator” –

1. a reminder that the ONLY reason we are here is because God created us. He created us and ALL that is in this world.
 2. This also reminds us that it is HIS world – He is sovereign God and has the right to set the rules, which are for our good.
 3. He is a loving God who genuinely cares about us and His way of living is the right way to live. How much better would our world be if all followed the moral dictates of His will?
- iii. When we remember God while young:
1. It is much easier to develop spiritual habits that will stay with you through your life. Think of Timothy – 2 Timothy 3:15 – from childhood he had known the holy scriptures...
 2. Think of one who decides early on that they are going to give their lives to God.
 - a. They are in a position to become leaders in the church – becoming elders, deacons and preachers are not things that develop overnight. One foolish decision can keep that form ever becoming a reality.
 - b. Young ladies, need to prepare early and decide they will marry a Christian, be a godly wife, and help their husband qualify to serve as leaders in the church.
 - c. Think of how many times you will read through the Bible if you make it a habit early on.
 - d. Think of how you will view possessions if early you determine that God is ALWAYS going to get His portion off the top instead of the bottom.
 - e. Think of the spiritual wisdom you will have at an earlier age because you started early
 - f. Think of the souls you might influence to come to Jesus and save their soul from eternal condemnation.
 - g. THINK of the troubles and heartaches you might prevent for yourself and others. More righteous living and less regrets.
- iv. ***Do not put off serving God till later –***
1. First, later is NEVER guaranteed. We all know that life is uncertain. Things happen, and sometimes even the young are caught up in tragedy.
 2. Furthermore, there is danger in putting it off. The more times we put off surrendering to God, the easier it becomes to KEEP putting it off. Eventually, it will reach the point where your heart is hardened, and you won't even think about it!
 3. We are reminded of the poem where someone kept putting off God with each stage of life until the next one comes along. But the problem is there is always another excuse to put it off a little longer.
We sometimes sing the song, Time enough yet which is about that very thing.
- v. Finally, Solomon notices that the difficult days are coming, and the years will draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them." He proceeds to describe how the body wears out. That will be our next lesson.

And thus, we can see the challenge to remember God in the days of your youth, BEFORE it is too late and you look back and realize that vanity of the life you have lived. But what if you are past that? The truth is, it is still not too late – start where you are right now and move forward from here, resolving that you will give God whatever time you are left with. BUT in this lesson, let me urge you, NO MATTER what your age, do not put it off – because you do not know how much time you have left. Is there some way that I can help you? Think about it!