

Sunday, May 9, 2021 pm

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (36)

When You Say “I Have No Pleasure in Them”

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

We are beginning to bring our 3 year monthly study of this book to its conclusion. In our last lesson we noted the call for youth – enjoy your life while you are young, BUT do not forget God in the process. In Ecclesiastes 12:1 Solomon gives a reason for this stating, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult times come...” Tonight, I want to talk about this text as it describes the life that is winding down, in older age.

I. The text

- a. **Remember Your Creator... BEFORE...** - Solomon is challenging youth, and as we noted, all of us, at whatever age we are right now, to remember God.
 - i. The reason he gives in our text is because we are not getting any younger. He makes the observation that “the difficult days come” – days when it is harder to do what you used to do.
 - ii. The years will come when you will say, “*I have no pleasure in them*”, or “I cannot do that anymore” or there is a realization that to do what you used to do requires too much effort and possibly aches and pains to the point where you say, “It is not worth it anymore.”
IT is an interesting observation, that as people age, they become more prepared to leave this world. Moses in Psalm 90 9-10 said, *For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; We finish our years like a sigh. 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.*
 - iii. Hopefully, as we age and tire of our bodies wearing out, we are spiritually prepared for that (Hebrews 9:27)
 - iv. This is NOT talking about someone giving up (though that often happens). It is talking about reaching a time where you literally are unable to do those things anymore.
- b. As we get older our bodies begin to wear out which is what Solomon describes (2-5)
 - i. **While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are not darkened** – exactly what this addresses is unknown, but perhaps the best observation with all of these combined is speaking of enjoying life. Solomon has talked about life under the sun more than 20 times. And while the description is often associated with doom – and the point being life as it goes on – as this book progresses the term is often related to good – Eccl. 8:15 – he commanded enjoyment; Eccl. 9:9 – live joyfully with the wife of your youth all the days of your vain life under the sun, which has been given to you by God.
 - ii. **And clouds do not return after the rain** – youth often experiences problems and setbacks – we all do, but unless he has created them, usually they resolve and life goes on with happiness (I do realize in all of this there are exceptions).
But with the elderly, the relief seems to be short lived and it is not long before the “clouds return after the rain.” You live long enough, life eventually becomes more problems than not.
 - iii. **When the keepers of the house tremble** – most see this as hands doing the work we are called upon to do. Eccl. 9:10, “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might...”
With age, our strength begins to leave and we cannot do as much, and trembling comes more often with what we are doing.

- iv. ***And the strong men bow down*** – possibly a reference to one’s legs (which would logically link to the previous statement) becoming weak. Again, you cannot do as much as you used to.
 - v. ***When the grinders cease because they are few*** – teeth begin to fall out. You have to change your diet because you cannot eat certain foods without it hurting.
 - vi. ***Those that look through the window grow dim*** – your eyesight begins to fail.
 - vii. ***When the doors are shut in the streets and the sound of grinding is low*** – possibly a reference to hearing which is also failing with age.
 - viii. ***When one rises up at the sound of a bird,*** – while you are hard of hearing and sight, yet the least noise becomes a distraction, and you cannot go back to sleep.
 - ix. ***And all the daughters of music are brought low*** - you voice becomes weaker. You cannot sing, or hold a tune, like you used to.
 - x. ***Also they are afraid of height and of terrors in the way*** – we become more feeble and timid. Less willing to do things that pose even slight danger. There is the fear of falling for whatever reasons. There is a reason, those who are older drive slower, etc. – their response time is lessened, and while they are safe, they are just not as quick as before. Little things are scary.
 - xi. ***When the almond tree blossoms*** – an almond tree has white flowers (with a redish center), but they are mostly white. Often the elderly hair turns silver or white – losing its pigment. See Proverbs 16:31, *The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness.*
 - xii. ***The grasshopper is a burden*** – NASB – the grasshopper drags himself along – again with age we become slower and thus unable to move as swiftly as before.
 - xiii. ***Desire fails*** – the NASB says, “the caperberry is ineffective” – most see this as a reference to one’s sexual desires failing in time.
 - xiv. ***The point of all this*** – as we age, we begin to wear out. And while our bodies may still function, it is not like it used to be or “like the good old days” as some might say.
- c. And eventually we will die –
- i. Most see the description of verses 6-8 as describing death, when one takes his final breath. This is possibly describing the vital organs and systems we need to survive.
 - ii. ***Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed*** – some see this as the precious and valuable gift of life; Others describe the spinal chord which supports the head (tied to next phrase).
 - iii. ***The golden bowl is broken*** – possibly the brain or skull. When one passes, the spinal chord quits supporting the head and it slumps over.
 - iv. ***The pitcher is shattered at the fountain*** – possibly the heart stops beating
 - v. ***The wheel is broken at the well*** – your other internal organs stop and release.
 - vi. ***Then the dust returns to the earth*** – consider how many was made from “dust”. After sinning, death is described as returning to dust (Genesis 3:19).
 - vii. ***And the spirit returns to God who gave it*** – Hebrews 9:27 again. After death, we face judgment. We are again reminded of the many passages that warn of this.
 - viii. ***This is a vivid picture of one leaving to a ripe old age, but then he dies*** – it is inevitable and unpreventable! With responsible behavior you MAY be able to extend life, but not indefinitely.

II. Remembering God when we are older

- a. FIRST, as we have noted, this text is actually directed to youth and remembering God while young, while you can give God your best and more fully develop – more strength, more agile, a sharper mind, etc. The point of Solomon’s description is to cause us ALL to think and realize that time is

limited – not just how much you have, but how much you have IN YOUR CURRENT condition. How often does scripture warn about NOW –

- i. Romans 13:11 reminds us, *And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*
 - ii. Galatians 6:10 notes that as we have opportunity, we are to do good.
 - iii. Ephesians 5:15-16 tells us to walk circumspectly (mindful and careful) by *redeeming the time because the days are evil.* The very point Solomon made in vs. 1. The KJV, ASV, NASB, ESV – say before “evil days come.”
 - iv. Do not forget that opportunities lost may never return. That is why, as you enjoy life you must NEVER forget God, especially in your decision making.
- b. But what if you have waited?
- i. What if you are older and look back at a life of regrets?
 1. OR, because of your physical or material limitations you feel useless?
 2. Maybe there is guilt because of your past
 3. Or there is greater fear because of weaknesses – losing your health, or even your friends, your home and financial security, and other things.
 - ii. Understand that such things are not exclusive to the elderly, but they often weigh more as you get older.
 - iii. But in such things remember God’s grace and mercy. WE ALL need His grace – Titus 2:11 teaches us that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Most of the NT letters begin and/or end addressing God’s grace to us. We are reminded in scripture that God forgives instantly when we truly repent. 1 John 1:9.
 - iv. The key is to START where you are right now.
 - v. You will likely NOT be able to reclaim that which is gone, but with whatever time and resources you have left, use them for His glory.
- c. One might ask, if I am older and in poor(er) health, what can I do?
- i. First, realize that even in these times the aged are needed. For example: The Lord’s church is in danger as a younger generation is seeking to trivialize the need for authority in all that we do. Churches need the elderly, to with wisdom strive to direct congregations back to the old paths (Jeremiah 6:16)
 - ii. The elderly have lived a life and have **wisdom** to offer in all areas. Be willing to share that wisdom with a younger generation that desperately needs it. Titus 2:3-5 speaks of older women teaching the younger women. The book of proverbs is written by a man of wisdom (Solomon) to his son – Proverbs 1:8, “*My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother.*” It is NOT a mistake that “elders” in the Lord’s church must have maturity. 1 Timothy 1:6 – not a novice.
 - iii. The elderly can be a source of encouragement –
 1. They can say kind and encouraging words to those who are doing the work.
 2. IF able, they can make phone calls, send cards, smile, etc.
 3. NOTE: This is a 2-way street – the elderly, because of all that they have been through and are dealing with ought to be encouraged and thanked for what they do.
 4. I cannot think of a greater example of encouragement than someone in their later years who attends services, or does acts of kindness, even though they are dealing with restricted health. As you get older it takes longer to get ready and get moving for the day – but they do that and are here. When those much younger will let any excuse keep them from doing what they ought to do.

5. Romans 12:6-8 says, *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.* NOTICE the first phrase which basically says, YOU ARE YOU and have your gifts – NOT someone else. Use what you have.
 - iv. The elderly can pray, and as they are able, support the work being done by the church. It is needed AND appreciated! Again, this is like everyone who is a Christian. It is doing what you can do. James 5:16 – the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man.
- d. Finally, let all of us not forget to show honor to the aged.
 - i. Proverbs 16:31, *The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness.*
 - ii. Proverbs 20:29, *The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head.*
 - iii. It was actually commanded in Leviticus 19:32 – rise before them in respect.
 - iv. This is something woefully lacking in our society today. It is a blight that will haunt future generations if they do not change.

The old saying, “You are not getting any younger” is so true. As time goes on, if you are blessed with continued life, you will start to wear out. How prepared are you to deal with that. I remember years ago saying something stupid. I would tell myself, I would rather enjoy a robust life (e.g. eating what I want) even if it means cutting my life short by a few years. NOW I regret having said that – because as I get older (and I’m not that old yet), the aches and pains remind me that if I had looked to my health more seriously, my QUALITY of life would be better. Friends that is true spiritually as well. Live life to its fullest and enjoy where you are now, BUT don’t forget God and realize that what you do today WILL have consequences tomorrow. How are you living your life today? Think about it!