

"THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH"

Ecclesiastes 12:1

"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." Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Youth has been a subject of interest in all the centuries. Each generation has thought that the rising generation was not quite up to its standard. When the present young people become parents, they too will look on the coming generation very much as the older generation looks on them now. They will be saying, "What are these young people coming to?" Finding fault with youth is a favorite indoor pastime of many. If young people are below the level of their parents, whose fault is it? Those who condemn them find themselves in the plight of the man who said to his son, "I have taught you all I know, and you don't know anything yet." Our young people have entered a "ready-made world." Their elders have made it, so youth is not to be blamed for it. Young people have never been responsible for the world which has been prepared for their arrival. Youth needs and deserves sympathetic understanding and the proper example.

In a novel Disraeli had one character say, "Youth is a blunder, manhood is a struggle, and old age is a regret." That statement is not true. For those who are Christians and live right, youth is an opportunity, manhood is achievement, and old age is a holy memory. Christian young people have numerous commendable qualities such as, frankness, idealism, strength, enthusiasm, adventure, optimism and trustworthiness.

Youth is a period that soon passes. How quickly it flits away! It is merely a matter of days. It is the brief period during which we stand on the shore preparing for the voyage across the ocean of life. And it is the brevity of this period that is emphasized in the expression, "In the days of thy youth." They are so brief in their duration and so rapid in their flight. They come enriched with numerous and priceless treasures, but they are soon gone. Youth is a shorter period than childhood or manhood and womanhood. Yet much is crowded into those years. It is the time when learning is comparatively easy. It is the time when people learn to do things. It is the time of strength, and of an abundance of energy, zeal and zest.

It is very doubtful if young people properly evaluate and rightly appreciate their youth as they should. Many of them are so impatient because they are so young. They feel the limitations that beset them. When they look around them they see that the better positions are filled with those who are older, and they wish they were old enough to obtain some of the good things which older people have. That desire was expressed by a girl of whom a friend inquired, "How old are you?" She said, "I'll be seventeen next year." Her answer revealed her anxiety to be seventeen rather than sixteen. Because she did not know the value of her youth, she wished it were gone. To young people it is the time of apprenticeship and training; the time when they have to master the work by which they are to make their living in the future. Just as the apprentice is eager for the day when the apprenticeship will be ended, so young people are eager to be done with their youth.

There are two great tests of life with which young people have to grapple and struggle. There is the pull of pride and the lust of the flesh. Young people have an urge to have their fling and to throw everything out of the way in order to realize their desires. In his "Frederick the Great" Carlyle referred to the licentious conduct of a youthful prince in the following manner: "Bright young soul, with its fine strengths and gifts, wallowing life a young rhinoceros in a mud-bath. Some say it is wholesome for a human soul. Not we!"

It seems to me that these words deserve to be written in letters of gold for the perusal of every youth setting out in life, and more especially in these days, when by many it seems to be regarded as a necessity in the life of the young that a certain period of life should be given up to sowing wild oats; or in Carlyle's expressive phrase, taking mud-baths. I should like to emphasize the folly and shame and sorrow which result to those who accept this mischievous theory of the transition from youth to manhood or womanhood.

Of all periods in life youth is the most important in determining what manner of person he or she shall become. It is the period when the inquiry, "Wherewithal shall a young man keep his way clean?" presses for an answer. It is an incalculable gain for all the years to come to escape moral pollution in youth. The greatest strength is in those who have never indulged in evil. If you will read the biographies of those who have served God faithfully in maturity, you will find that they all look back with anguish on the sins of their youth.

"The days of thy youth" are those in which the foundations of adulthood are built. Youth is the time when the habits of life are formed. This is true in all phases of life-- in working, in serving, and in giving.

"The days of thy youth" are those in which enduring friendships are formed. Of course, men and women make friends when they have passed their youth, but they do not make them so easily, and they are not likely to be so intimate or enduring as those formed in youth. The older one gets, the more he values his friends. The man who is without friends is, indeed, the poorest of mortals. Next to God and our parents, no one affects our lives for good or evil like our friends. If you know a man's intimate friends, you can form a fairly accurate opinion of him. "Birds of a feather flock together." "They that lie down with the dogs, get up with fleas." A man's friendships help to make him or to break him. True friendship enables, purifies, and exalts.

"I would be true, for there are those who trust me,
I would be pure, for there are those who care."

There is one friendship I trust each of you, who has not already made, will make immediately, and that is with Jesus Christ. He is the best friend any young person can have. Do not wait until you are broken with the disappointment of life, and stained with the defilement of the sins of the world, before coming to Him. Give to Him your youth. Offer to Him the brightest and fairest part of life, and He will make the rest of it brighter and fairer still. No other friendship will do so much for you as friendship with Christ, and no other will enable you to do so much for others. If you would achieve the highest and best in life, cultivate definite and intimate friendship with Jesus Christ "in the days of thy youth."

No scripture was more directly pointed or more solemnly made to the rising generation than the words of our text. It plainly teaches us that every person has a Creator. It implies that a person may forget his Creator. It is easy to remember God in the days of adversity, but it is not easy in times of prosperity, when one has money in his pocket, when he is enjoying the best of health, when his family is well, and when his business is flourishing. While passing through such a period of prosperity it is easy to forget God. But, in times of sickness, adversity and business reverses one can remember God very easily.

One should remember God by thinking of His person, by reflecting on His character, by acknowledging His goodness, by meditating on His Words, by trusting Him, by loving Him, and by obeying Him. We should remember Him because He is our Creator, because He is infinitely worthy of being remembered and because we cannot be happy without Him.

Every young person should remember God in the days of his youth--not then only, but then firstly. The first portion of life is due to God. It is the formation period of life. One is more open to impression than in later years. In youth the heart is better prepared to admit light and to do the right. Youth is the best time to accept His strength and guidance for all of the future. Habits formed in youth leave their mark upon us in all the remainder of life.

It is foolish to live a godless life. To leave God out of one's life is an act of sheer folly. To forget Him is to act with the utmost foolishness. Wisdom demands that you

exercise simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, make His Word the rule of your conduct, follow Him persistently in service, and endeavor to do His will from day to day.

Youth is the most favorable time for remembering Him. He is more easily remembered then because the evil days of temptation and sin, business and worry, afflictions and sorrows, disease and decay have not come.

Rightly remember Him in the days of thy youth and He will greatly bless and enrich every subsequent period of life. It will be a great blessing to you, and then it will make you a blessing to others. Because of the proneness there is in youth to put off spiritual matters to the future, and to think that a future time will be more favorable, this all-important matter should be attended to at once. Do not overlook the source of strength. Recognize the Creator, His goodness, and His claim of your allegiance. Do not neglect the spiritual side of your nature. Do not put off the right decision until the more convenient season.

The uncertainty of life and the certainty of death and the judgment make it imperative that one not neglect the eternal salvation of his soul. Youth might be the only time that is allotted to you. The youngest and the healthiest are often speedily removed from us. You may die while you are young. As many die in youth as in other periods of life. God may take away your breath at His pleasure. In view of this fact the only wise thing to do is to become a Christian in the days of your youth. If you don't, the time will come when you will wish you had done so. Whether you like to think about it or not, a judgment day is approaching.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27.

Don't forget that you can be saved. God loves us. Christ died for us. The door to salvation is now open to you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."