

HOW TO HAVE ROSES IN DECEMBER

"And they shall utter the memory of thy great goodness." Psalm 145:7.

"That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." Ecclesiastes 3:15.

"God gave us memory that we might have roses in winter." Sir James M. Barrie.

In an address at St. Andrews University in Scotland Dr. Barrie discussed in a popular way and in simple language the problems of life. One sentence which he used caught the attention of the students and held it to the end. It was something like this: "My you so live that you will have roses in December."

What extremes are expressed in those words -- roses and December! Roses speak of summer. When the sun reaches its meridian splendor, and the skies are blue, and nature clothes herself in garments of beauty, the rose, which is the queen of flowers, charms our senses with her color and fragrance. December speaks of winter, when the heavens are gloomy, the trees are bare, the gardens are empty, and the birds are silent.

Roses are rare in December, but they are not unknown. We prize them then because they seem more lovely and fragrant than roses in June. And roses can be ours in December. Memory is the magic power making possible our roses in December. Memory can give us beauty amid blackness, can bring us merriment in our misery, can make us glad in our gloom, and can produce fragrance even though we are forsaken. Gipsy Smith, Sr., once wrote, "Remembrance is a Paradise from which we need not be driven." To remember the sacrifice of mother, or the devotion of father, or the love of wife, or the faithfulness of husband, or the affection of a child, is healing balm to a broken heart.

When the home is bare and the life is desolate, what perfume the memory of a godly friend emits. If forlorn and lonely, we always feel better as we think of those whose presence was a benediction. The memory of the just is blessed! Our holy dead are roses that never fade. No matter how bleak our winter may be, we never feel the chill, if only we have a memory without a sting.

Springtime symbolizes childhood and youth; summertime symbolizes the choicest period of adulthood; but December is the symbol of old age.

Careful study will reveal that the author of the book of Ecclesiastes in the last two chapters gives the true solution of the problems of life. He reveals the relation of the present to the future; the relation between seed sowing and harvest; and then he affirms that life is not terminated at the grave. He also reveals that God holds men accountable for their conduct, and as the book concludes it is a message not only to the aged but to youth. "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.'"

Friend, if you and I are to have and to enjoy roses in the December time of life, certain things must be done in the springtime and summertime of life. For example, there must be: --

1. The filling of the memory with good things.

Oh memory! glorious memory! star-lit memory! There are memories of home, the fireside, the eveninghymn, mother's voice, a last farewell, etc. Memories -- the sweetest music of the past. Read the best books. Store the memory with good things. Those who spend their time in questionable places and doing questionable things when they might be reading good things and learning something worthwhile are missing more than they can imagine.

I have known some old people who were miserable. They were not only unhappy themselves, but they made life unpleasant for all who were associated with them. Some are unhappy because they harbor grudges and cultivate dislikes and hatreds for others on account of fancied or actual wrongs. Some people are unhappy because they magnify trivial things that do not matter, and they have others whom they refuse to forgive. If we are to be happy we must throw out of the window of the memory all the things that would disturb our peace of mind.

My observation is limited, to be sure, but I can frankly say that I have never known a person to be happy in life's wintertime who was a critic, complainer or fault-finder in the springtime and summertime of life. If you would have roses in December fill your memory with good things during the other eleven months.

2. The speaking of kind words and the doing of kind deeds.

Kind words and kind deeds make other lives blossom as well as our own. They bring out the best in others. Kindness is one of the greatest powers in human life. It opens minds that were obstinately closed to all logic. It kindles hearts that were unresponsive to eloquence. It transforms souls which argument could not change. It makes life's capabilities blossom. What are you doing to make other lives blossom? Someone said,

"So many faiths, so many creeds,
So many roads that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is what this old world needs."

3. Much worship in spring and summer.

Many could not carry on in the dark days that befall them if it were not for the courage which comes to them through the services of the churches. Just think of the good you do to others, as well as for yourself, by joining in the public worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is estimated that in the case of those getting divorces in our courts nine out of ten of the principals involved to do not attend church services and worship the Lord.

4. Much study of the Word of God.

Winter frequently comes before the arrival of old age. Even with you, the time may come when you will have difficulty in reading a few verses from the Word of God. So, while you have opportunity, read something in the Bible every day. Fill your memory with the precious Word. Then when the evening time comes and the shadows gather around you, the promises of God will shine out as stars and cheer you to the very end of the way. The statements of this deathless Book will live in your ears like unforgettable music, or like the sound of the church bells from your childhood days.

5. Much love and service.

Real live is so precious. This world needs a real manifestation of genuine love. Isn't it strange that many people really believe that the Christian religion is dull? Living the Christian life may be hard work. It may even mean carrying a cross, if you are in earnest. But dull! Dull! Not when it means living in fellowship with Almighty God. Not when it means being called of God to splendid endeavor for Him and for humanity. Dull! Not when it means having the finest powers of your nature strung up to their highest. Dull! Not when it means having roses in life's December time. When one says Christianity is dull, you may rest assured that he has never had any experience in following the Lord Jesus Christ.

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live,
'Tis religion can supply
Peace and comfort when we die."

And ROSES IN DECEMBER."