

**How Youth Is Wasted (#1)**  
Ecclesiastes 12:1-7; Hebrews 2:3  
June 24, 2007  
Rev. Greg L. Price

To waste what God has given to us (whether it be time or talents, whether it be wealth or health, whether it be food or drink, whether it be doctrine or life) is to rob our gracious God of His free gifts to us. As parents who want your children to appreciate and to use the blessings of this earthly life for God's glory, you know how hard you work with your children not to waste time daydreaming when it is time to do school work, not to waste their bodies by being lazy and gluttonous, and not to waste their souls by forgetting their Creator in the days of their youth. Dear ones, there is no greater waste than to waste your life (and especially the youthful days of your life) upon your own mere glory. Even if you should embrace Christ by faith alone and should commit all your ways unto your Creator later in life before you are laid in the grave, how many years have been wasted serving self and loving self, rather than serving God and loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Those youthful years of strength and zeal are gone and cannot be recalled.

In our text from Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, the Preacher (Solomon), who knew what it was to waste years on the things of this life that are perishing and vanishing while forgetting his Creator, calls you not to repeat his sins in forgetting God and wasting years in your life. This Book of Ecclesiastes is most likely Solomon's look back over his life and all that he has learned from his wisdom and his folly. As he approaches the Conclusion to this inspired Book, he exhorts you all not to waste what God has given to you, especially the days of your youth. The main points from our text are these: (1) Remember Your Creator while You Are Young (Ecclesiastes 12:1a); and (2) Remember Your Creator before Old Age and Death Hinder You (Ecclesiastes 12:1b-7). We will only be able to cover the first main point in this sermon.

**I. Remember Your Creator while You Are Young (Ecclesiastes 12:1a).**

A. You will recall from the previous sermon that the wisest man that ever lived counseled those who were older (in Ecclesiastes 11:11:7-8) and those who were younger (in Ecclesiastes 11:9-10) to wisely consider that death is coming to us all. We cannot escape it. We cannot ignore it and make it go away. The grave awaits us all. In light of that certain truth, how then should we live in this present life? Since none of us knows when we shall breathe our last breath, we must live our lives as if today was our last day, as if today our body should be placed into the ground to await the final resurrection, and as if our soul should be taken from these mortal bodies to appear before the holy God who made us. Solomon's wise counsel to us is to remember that however far death may be from us, we shall be judged for what we have done in these bodies: "but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Only those who carefully prepare for death and the judgment to come by embracing Christ by faith alone and making Christ their life and reason for living will know the joy of the Lord and a peace that passes all understanding in this life.

B. The Holy Spirit now speaks through Solomon in the text before us with similar admonition to those of you who are young not to waste your younger years upon yourself (for all of that will vanish and perish), but rather to invest your younger years in remembering and serving God (for that alone will endure for all eternity). People invest money into financial projects all of the time, hoping to receive a return on their money. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. But wouldn't you consider it the height of foolishness to invest money into something that you knew with certainty was going to fail and was going to cost you all that you had invested (or even worse, to cost you everything you own)? And yet to invest your younger years in yourself is such a certain failure. It will cost you all those years and perhaps even all the years for the rest of

your life. For so often when young people go seeking their own pleasures and sowing their “wild oats”, many never again seriously consider their Creator until it is too late. The folly of youth is that you always think there will be time later to repent of your sins and to correct your failures, and so you procrastinate and put off that which is most necessary—the eternal salvation of your souls. You may even think that because you have made a profession of faith in Christ and have been baptized that you can put off dealing with unrepentant sins in your life. Dear ones, the evidence of saving faith in your life is that you do not procrastinate in dealing with sin, but rather that you run as quickly as you can to Christ to repent of sin, to seek His forgiveness, and to endeavor new obedience.

1. Carefully note first that what Solomon declares (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) is not a suggestion, but is rather a command: “Remember” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Don’t forget because you become too busy. Don’t neglect this duty because you are having too much fun doing other things. Here is a command to remember.

a. Dear ones, how easy it is for to forget. You don’t have to go out and intentionally forget. You don’t have to hate and despise what it is that you are to remember. All you have to do is to allow yourself to become so preoccupied with other pressing concerns, business, or pleasures, and soon you will forget what you were commanded to remember. Just as you do not have to sow weeds in your garden in order to see it infested and overcome with weeds. All you have to do is to forget that the garden needs to be weeded regularly, and soon the flowers, shrubs, or vegetables will be choked out due to the spread and growth of weeds. So likewise, you do not have to set out to forget what it is to be remembered. You only have to become so busy or so consumed with other things, and soon there will be a hundred things that have flooded into your mind to replace that which was most needful to be remembered. If you do not constantly and regularly come back and seriously reflect upon what you are commanded to remember, you will forget (no matter how important it is). The chief reason why the children of Israel were destroyed by God in the wilderness, after having been so miraculously rescued and protected by God was that they forgot God, ignored God, and neglected God (Psalm 106:21). How shall you likewise escape the judgment of God, if you neglect, ignore, or forget the God of your salvation (Hebrews 2:3)? What Solomon commands you to remember here in Ecclesiastes 12:1 is so important that no excuses you make will be judged acceptable by the Lord for having forgotten. In fact, to forget what is commanded here by Solomon may not only cause you injury, but may cause you to lose your own soul in the lake of fire forever. This is a matter of life and death.

b. To remember does not import a mere intellectual recollection. To remember is to remember with faith, to remember with hope, to remember with love, to remember with awe and wonder of God, and to remember with obedience. If you children are told by your parents to remember to clean your room, or to remember to wash the dishes, or to remember to mow the yard, do you think you will be able to excuse your disobedience before your parents by saying, “I did remember what you said I was to do, I just didn’t do it, or I just didn’t want to do it.” Of course not! So it is likewise true here with Solomon’s command to remember. The command to remember in Ecclesiastes 12:1 is one that affects your whole life: what you say with your tongue, what you listen to with your ears, what you watch with your eyes, what you run to with your feet, what you embrace with your hands, and what you think with your minds. When you truly obey this command to remember, it will affect the doctrine you profess and the practice of that doctrine in your life. Dear ones, when you manifest fear in your life, is it not because you have forgotten the power and might of your Creator? When you exhibit the lusts of the flesh, is it not because you have forgotten that your Creator sees all and that sin is committed in His very presence? When you sinfully speak against God, against His providence, or against your neighbor, is it not because you have forgotten that God governs all things for His own glory and for the good of His people? To forget God is to think and act as if He does not exist, or does not care what you do in your life. It is to live as an atheist or as an agnostic (even if you profess faith in Christ).

c. Because the Lord knows your sinful proneness to forget, He as commanded you, “REMEMBER the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Because the Lord knows your sinful tendency to

forget, He has given you the visible signs and seals of the sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper, Christ says, "This do in REMEMBRANCE of me" (Luke 22:19). The very preaching of the Word of God is to put you in remembrance of Christ and His revealed will (1 Timothy 4:6). Beloved, if you were to leave your spouse or children for a while and you didn't want them to forget you, you might give them a photo of yourself in order to help them to remember you. Well, the Lord graciously and lovingly gives you His Commandments, His Sacraments, and His Ordinances, so that (like that photo) you might remember Him in faith, in hope, in love, and in obedience all the days of your life. That is why it is so necessary to maintain daily secret worship and daily family worship, so that a day does not go by that you fail to remember the Lord your God.

2. Second, what is commanded to be remembered is "thy Creator" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Quite literally, the Hebrew text states, "thy Creators" (in the plural), which is an intimation of the three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity (just as is seen in the plural pronouns used in Genesis 1:26-27). You are to remember in trust, hope, love, and obedience the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as One eternally existent God.

a. REMEMBER that He made you and not yourself (Psalm 100:2-3). Therefore, you are to offer your life to Him as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).

b. REMEMBER that your Creator is also your Preserver. Therefore, nothing happens by accident in this universe or in the life of any of you. You are sustained every moment of the day because your Creator provides for your needs. You are to joyfully express to Him continually your thanksgiving for all that you have and to be content with what the Lord gives you or does not give you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

c. REMEMBER that your Creator is also man's Savior through faith alone in Christ and His perfect obedience. You are all sinners, having sinned in Adam (Romans 5:19), having a corrupt nature in which you were conceived (Psalm 51:5), and having personally transgressed the law of God daily in thought, word, and deed (Romans 3:23). You deserve God's everlasting wrath and condemnation in the everlasting torment of hell for your sin. However, out of His undeserved kindness and mercy, He unconditionally chose before the foundation of the world an elect people for Himself (Ephesians 1:4), covenanted to redeem this chosen people through the obedience, death, and resurrection of the Son of God (Genesis 3:15), and freely applies that redemption to believing sinners (even to the chief of sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15), so that none may boast or take any glory to himself/herself, but rather give all glory to God alone (1 Corinthians 1:27-31).

d. REMEMBER that your Creator is also your Sanctifier. Having been justified by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ alone and having been judicially forgiven all your transgressions by God as your Judge once and for all, God is not yet finished with you in this life. You are to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by means of the Word of God, the Sacraments, and Prayer (Romans 8:29). As you pass through the many afflictions, trials, and tribulations of this life, you are to cling to Christ not only for your justification, but also for your sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). God uses even the trials and afflictions of this life to make you yearn for Him and your heavenly home, wherein you shall be perfectly conformed to the holy image of your dear Savior. Dear ones, all who enter the glories of heaven will in this life have desired and sought (by God's grace) to love God's commandments and to obey God's commandments. And when they have failed to do so (as we all do daily), they will sorrow over their sin, confess it before God, seek the fatherly forgiveness of God, and will endeavor new obedience as they eye the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Dear Christians, love and desire not only the mercy and grace of God, but also love and desire the holiness of God.

e. REMEMBER that your Creator is also man's Judge, before whom we will all appear on that Last Day. None will be able to escape His all seeing eye. All will give an account before the Lord as to what we have done in these bodies (whether good or bad, 2 Corinthians 5:10). On that day, you will either stand before this just Judge pleading your own righteousness or pleading the righteousness of your Savior. Dear ones, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Do you seek to live (whether in secret or in public) in the presence of God before whom you will stand on that Last Day? There will be no man-centered salvation or worship before the throne of Almighty God on that Last Day.

All crowns and rewards that Christians receive will be cast at the Lord's feet (Revelation 4:10), acknowledging that from beginning to end, salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

3. Third, note when it is commanded that you are to remember: "now . . . in the days of thy youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The Creator is to be remembered while you are young, rather than to be remembered whenever you feel like it, as if it was something that could wait until you are older.

a. There is an urgency to this command that is like a siren that sounds a warning to everyone that an emergency exists. Now is the time to be watchful and vigilant—not later when you think it might be more convenient and comfortable for you. For if you wait to remember this command, you may never have an opportunity again to remember what Solomon here commands. The longer you wait to remember your Creator, the more you are likely to forget Him and to become mired in your busy, self-seeking, pleasure-oriented world that preoccupies you. Dear ones, when you seek your own ways and turn from seeking the ways of the Lord, God gives you over to the desires of your own heart, just as He did with Israel of old in the wilderness. They were not content with God's mercies to them, so God delivered them over to their own fleshly desires (Psalm 78:17-29). Therein you learn the hard way that your sinful desires, which you thought would make you so happy, only end up leading you into greater misery. And if God grants you repentance, you will learn through your own foolishness and misery the vanity of a life lived apart from Jesus Christ. Solomon knew this from his own experience, and he seeks to spare you the same bitter lessons.

b. You, children and young people, are here addressed by Solomon not to delay in taking hold of Christ by faith alone as your only Savior, not to procrastinate until you are older to make Christ your life and the reason for living. You are not to think that you can please yourself with all of the pleasures of life now, and then sometime before you die, make everything right with God, your Creator. Many have had the same idea, but never were granted repentance by God before they died and passed into an eternity without Christ. You see, dear children and young people, faith in Christ and repentance unto life are gracious gifts worked within a person by the Lord. And when they are spurned and despised, neglected and ignored, or delayed and forgotten, you have no guarantee that the Lord will later in life grant you the grace to lay hold of Christ and to repent and sorrow over your many offences against a most holy and most gracious God. Dear ones, it is a lie of the devil, cunningly crafted and suggested to you, that you can delay trusting Christ, delay repenting of sin, or delay making Christ your life. Commit yourself to the Lord, take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Him. It is not easy to take up that cross and to show forth the death of Christ in your life and to have your sins and lusts put to death on that cross. It is not comfortable to deny yourself the things in this life that you want for your own pleasure and to follow Christ, especially in suffering for Him and with Him. But you are taught in God's Word that if you would reign with Christ in heaven, you must first suffer with Christ here upon the earth (2 Timothy 2:12).

Copyright 2007 Greg L. Price.