

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 – When you Can't Serve the Lord

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You might remember from the last time Solomon urged young people to make preparations for life after death because death was certain – they could not avoid it, and because death was uncertain – they could die at any time. Today we will continue to see **2 more reasons young people must serve the Lord now.**

Our headings are: You can't serve the Lord properly when you are old, and You can't serve the Lord when you are dead.

Our goals are: That you **will be motivated to take this warning to every young person when you have the opportunity and discuss with them the preparations for life after death, and show them their need for the Savior.**

You Can't Serve the Lord When you are Old

1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

1. Solomon made an awful可怕mistake when he was young in turning away from God – forgetting God's law and worship.

More specifically, he forgot that the Lord was his Creator. He was overwhelmed by his own accomplishments, his knowledge, and his pleasures. In doing so, he robbed himself of the blessings of growing up among God's people.

He, like many young people today, flattered吹捧 himself in his own ability and wandered away from the Lord. But take warning from the Psalmist from Psalm 100. You forget this warning, you die in your sins!

Psalm 100:3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Thankfully someone spoke to Solomon about his wandering from God and he had the opportunity to repent and come back to serving the Lord later in life. But many young people do not have that opportunity. Supposed Solomon had died? What would have happened to his family – his wives and his children? More importantly, what would have happened to the line of Christ? You would remember how sickness and death can come quickly – as a thunderbolt雷电 or you can die while young like a baby sparrow麻雀 in his nest. The morning dew露水 is easily dried up in the sun.

2. In order to motivate young people to serve the Lord while they are young, Solomon reminded them that it is very difficult to serve the Lord when one is aged. He calls old age "difficult days." Old age is known as the "If only I could" age. Look at an example of what happens when one gets old – old Barzillai- who could not travel with King David and do the Lord's work. Try as he might, he couldn't do the things he used to do.

2Samuel 19:35 "I am today eighty years old. Can I discern识别 between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king?"

Henry: Don't give the cream and flower of your youth to the Devil. Serve the Lord in your youth! When you are young is when you have the energy. You can travel to go on a mission trip. You can speak long without tiring and take more hardships. You don't need as much sleep. You can jump out of bed and be ready to work or to praise the Lord. You need to help someone move? No problem. You run up and down the stairs. What blessings youth has! How difficult to do these things when one is old!

2 While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;

3. Let's now look how Solomon illustrated why one must not wait till old age to begin serving the Lord. He used

figurative比喻 expressions to describe the difficulties of the aged person's life. **Life looks bleak.** To the aged, the sun is never darkened. **Life is always dark.** There is no sunrise and sunset. There is usually pain- lots of pain in old age. Spend some time with old people...the conversation frequently become a talk about pain and suffering. When troubles (like rain) come, they do not end. There are no soft clouds after the rain...just dark clouds...day in, day out.

Psalm 90:10 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.

3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble发颤, And the strong men bow down; When the grinders磨床 cease because they are few, And those that look through the windows grow dim;

4. Old peoples' arms (keeper of the house) begin to shake and grow feeble衰弱. (The body is often called a house – Job 4:19, Psalm 119:54, 2Corinthians 5:1, so parts of the house can reasonably be attributed to the parts of the body.) The old can't fight back if there is danger. The one who was once like an animal – tough and agile, is now a timid胆怯 cat.
We often say: Once a man, twice a child.

5. Old peoples' legs and maybe their back (strong men) grow weak and muscles degenerate退化. They can't bear the weight of their body. They can't walk long distances. Running is out of the question – even running from danger, much like Eli who had to sit in his chair because of his age. How can the aged take the labors of loving and serving the Lord?

6. Teeth are missing (grinders) and the ones still present don't work like they used to. They especially can't eat meat as before. The one who can't eat properly is often weak. How can they have the endless energy to work, give rides to church, or visit someone, or cook, or clean for the sick or for one who just gave birth?

7. Eyes (looking through the window) don't work like they used to. Not everyone has the eyesight that Moses had at age 120. Most people lose their sight as they get older. Bi and tri-focals are the order of the day. You've seen old drivers on the road confidently straddling the white lines. The blind are like Isaac who was fooled by Jacob. The elderly are like the prophet Ahijah who would have been deceived by Rehoboam's wife if God had not helped him. How can they read the word and grow in grace?

4 When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, And all the daughters of music are brought low;

8. Old peoples' digestion doesn't work like it used to (doors shut). And the figurative grinding of the food in the stomach doesn't take place like it used to. How uncomfortable that must make the elderly! How can they have a pleasant conversation when they are grappling with stomach pains and irritations?

9. Old people can't sleep soundly; a bird wakes them up. Almost any noise wakes them up. Imagine how this affects their lives. How difficult it is to function – even attend worship and pay attention to the sermon – if you don't get a good night's rest... It is difficult to be a patient listener without a good night's sleep. You've probably yelled at your children, not because of what they did, but because you were tired and sleepy.

10. Old people can't sing well anymore. Solomon was a singer and a writer of songs...but in old age his voice was gone (daughters of music.) The aged can't sing the praises of Jehovah, though they may want to. They can't hear the notes.

5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.

11. Old people can't climb high places – maybe even to go to the roof to sleep in summer, as was common on those hot summer nights in Israel. Their legs are weak, their brain slows down, and they can't breathe properly. So they become deathly afraid of falling. Helping others becomes difficult.

12. Old people can't fight dangers – terrors- along the way like they used to when they were young. The old were prey猎物 for wild packs of animals.

13. Old peoples' hair gets white, like the almond blossom杏仁花. This, in and of itself, does not stop a man from being effective, but it rather shows age. Old men don't go to war because there is not a trust that they will be able to handle the rigors of war. Old men can't carry the weight as he did before – not the 50kgs back packs likes soldiers today. Even a grasshopper蚱蜢is a burden. (Note the hyperbole夸张.) Old men are not able to have the manly desires of young man, certainly not at the same level. And then man dies and people mourn for him.

14. Old men become mindless and listless, and the pleasures of senses are to them tasteless and sapless. So they lose desires for pleasures. The employments and enjoyments of the world quickly pass and the reality of death sets in. Job: Job 17:1 "My spirit is broken, My days are extinguished熄灭, The grave is ready for me.

You can't serve the Lord when you are dead

6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well. 7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

1. It is believable that Solomon was autobiographical here. He spoke with great emotions about the troubles of old age, and even regretful that he had not spent his youth better. But he wrote for your admonition – the young. He wanted you to know that old age brings many changes and limitations and then death is at your front door. And the longer the ship is filled up with water, the longer it will take to bail. The troubles he mentioned were just harbingers预示 of death.

2. Solomon then used 4 expressions of death: "the silver cord is loosed," "the golden bowl is broken," "the pitcher投手

shattered 垮,” and the wheel broken at the well. They all mean the same thing: death.

a. **The silver cord** 弦 seems to represent the connection between the body and soul – a beautiful euphemism 婉辞. We use similar language. Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christians love... the sacred knot 神圣的结 of marriage...etc.

b. **The golden bowl** represented the container of the waters of life...which are gone at death...and the water is poured out.

c. **The pitcher** which brought water from the well is shattered at the well and can bring home no water for survival.

d. **The wheel**, may refer to the water mill for moving water, is stopped-much like the mechanism for a watch-or the heart. When the water wheel was broken the crops stopped growing. I should note that some continue to use the figurative application to V6 differently. So they take the “silver cord” to mean the “spine,” the “golden bowl” to mean the “bladder,” or “skull,” the “pitcher” to be the “right ventricle (well) of the heart,” and the “wheel” to be the “aorta” or the “brain.” While Solomon knew a lot about science, I doubt whether he knew this kind of detail to write about it. It seems to be that he simply goes back to his description of death. (Context, context, context) Literally: Here is what old age is like (Verses 1-5) and then you are going to die. (Verse 6-7)

3. After death, your body will rot. We might put your body in the best casket, but it will rot. Even if it is not eaten by worms, it will dry-up and fall apart. Your body will turn back to its source, dust.

Psalm 103:14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

Genesis 3:19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

4. So knowing that your body will seize-up when you are old, and knowing that you will surely die, learn to remember and obey the Lord while you are young. Keep in mind that “remember” does not simply mean “to be cognizant of something” or “to call something to mind.” Rather, it means to “remember in order to do something.” When God’s Word says that you must remember your Creator, it meant that you must live for his glory by obeying his law. (Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy...Remember to obey.) So seek the Lord while he may be found.

5. But to obey God’s Word you have feed on his Word from your youth. You have to know God’s Words. You have to meditate on God’s Words.

Psalm 71:17 O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works.¹⁸ Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare

Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.

And to feed on God’s Words you have to be his child. See how it all starts with conversion! You can only do what you do to please God if you are a child of God through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

Your body will slow down and have all kinds of problems as you age. And when you are old you can’t serve the Lord well. Then you will die. And you will become worm’s meat. But death is like a strong healthy tree that is burned and the smoke goes up. Your body will become dust but your soul will go up like smoke from the burning tree to God. And your soul will have to give an answer for what you did with your life. You can’t become a Christian when you die.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Yes, you will age and die but your soul will not die with your body. Your soul will be raised up by the power of God from the grave. Psalm 49:15: “*But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me. Selah.*” **If this doesn’t make you worship God – and worship him well – nothing else will.**

Furthermore, **see why you need to make the message of Jesus Christ a regular part of your daily life and the life of your children and young people.** Don’t ever get tired speaking of the saving work of Jesus Christ to them. Invest the time and the money to make sure that they spend their youth serving the Lord instead of their personal pleasures or things this world says are great. Remember, the longer land is left unattended, the harder it is to plough it. And remember that the Devil will say it is okay to remember the Lord, but do it later...you don’t have to do it now. But he is a liar.

Finally, consider the Psalmist in Psalm 147:10), “...*for their strength will soon fail; but in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength; he has everlasting arms...*” You might be considered a success in this life, but you will not be in the next, if you are going before God alone. If you go with Jesus – with his life and death as your life and death as a substitute for you-then you are safe. May you ask God for the ability to go before him with confidence and safety when you die.