

Ecclesiastes 11: 9 and 10; “The Young Man Who Can Rejoice”, Message # 78 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 24th, 2021, at the Rendall Home.

Here is a lesson which has been learned by Solomon the Preacher the hard way, and so he would pass it on to all young men. When Solomon speaks to young men he is speaking to them, remembering his own life. He is looking back on it from the vantage point of having lived it in the way that he is now going to describe. His heart cheered him in the days of his youth, and he walked in the ways of his heart.

He is not describing something that is just occasionally seen in young men. He is describing something which is characteristic of all young men who have been given any amount of physical and mental strength by God, to rejoice in. He tells them that they should rejoice. But he also gives an important qualification to this rejoicing. And so this evening we want to look, 1st at the Exhortation, 2nd at the Qualification, and then 3rd, at the Conclusion, or how the young man should apply these truths to himself. Let us receive what God would have for each of us from this instruction.

1st of all – The Exhortation – Rejoice, O young man, in your youth.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes...” Solomon is saying that whether a young man knows the Lord, or doesn’t know the Lord, as of yet, he should rejoice in all of what God has given to him, in terms of the strength of his physical body, and the strength of his mind and spirit. These are things that have been given to him by God, and as such they are good. Martin Luther says, “When the heart is in a right state no joy will harm, provided only it be true joy, and not merely a corrupting mirth.” “Enjoy it, then, if there is anything pleasant for the sight or hearing, provided you sin not against God.” (end of quote)

We should understand that there is a natural rejoicing in the strength of the body and the keenness of the mind which naturally cause young people to rejoice in their youth, which is not at all sinful. As a young man begins to grow up, his own heart cheers him, as he spends time with others his age. And he is discovering many of the earthly things which God has given, which are good, together with others who are his age. When a person is young and strong, Solomon is saying, he should let his heart cheer him. Young men are, for the most part, not conscious of the fact that they will not continue to be young or strong, indefinitely.

There is a natural joy and rejoicing which come from God’s blessing their body, their mind, and their spirit, with natural strength. Many unbelieving young people are oblivious to the fact that God has given this strength and beauty to their physical person. But it ought not to be so that a believer does not see it. Turn with me to 1st Timothy 6, verse 17. Here the Apostle Paul says, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”

Now, you can see here that the uncertain riches of this world are being contrasted with God who gives all true riches, both material and spiritual. The person who trusts in their material wealth tends to be proud, believing that since they have this, that it is their strength and defense against everything bad that might happen to them in this life. It is his having money that brings the young man joy, and it is his knowing what money can do for him, that he thinks is his strength. He is not thinking of God as being His strength, or defense, or joy, or the One who alone can make him truly rich. And so he needs to be reminded that it is God who gives him all things richly to enjoy. And so, the lesson that Solomon would teach us is that we should rejoice in all that God gives us; both in terms of our personhood, and in terms of our physical strength,

our mental strength, and all of the health and well-being that we experience. But we are to remember that He gives it all.

Now turn over to Proverbs 10: 22. “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” Now, notice that it does not say that it is money that makes one rich or brings true joy, but that it is the blessing of the Lord that makes a person rich, and He adds no sorrow to it. So whatever we are given, if the Lord blesses it, it will prosper in the right way, and no sorrow will come to the young man over his having received it. He can truly rejoice. But we must understand that it is how he uses what he has been given that will make all the difference in his living his life and being able to truly rejoice. It is how a young man “walks in the ways of his heart” which will determine the outcome, both in this life and in the next.

Here in our text, Solomon says, “Let your heart cheer you,” young man, “in the days of your youth.” “Walk in the ways of your heart”. All this is said, by Solomon, in real seriousness; that the young man should rejoice, and yet it also appears that he is saying this by way of irony, because Solomon knows that even the best of men have to grapple with the “ways of their heart”. The way of your heart speaking to you is not always in line with the way that God speaks to you in His word. If you will turn with me over to Proverbs 23: 6, you will see this. “Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” “Eat and drink!” he says to you, but his heart is not with you.” “The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, and waste your pleasant words.”

These verses are referring to an unbelieving covetous man who thinks that all his prosperity he owes to himself, and his own shrewdness. He thinks that he is very generous and he says that he would have you to eat and drink with him. But really, he does not rejoice with you in your eating with him. He is more concerned with what he is losing financially in his having to entertain you and show you this hospitality. But the point that we need to see from this is – As he thinks in his heart, so is he. The way of his heart, which is covetous, is leading him to walk in the sight of his fleshly eyes in a sinful way. It may cheer him, and you now, but eventually you will not care for his friendship.

But let us come a little nearer. This “walking in the way of your own heart and eyes can even pose problems for a young person who knows God. I want us to think of two examples, one here, and the other in the third point of this message. The first example is Joseph, the son of Jacob, in the Old Testament book of Genesis. In Genesis 37, verses 2-8, it says, “This is the history of Jacob.” “Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers.’ “And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; ; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.” “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all of his children, because he was the son of his old age.” “Also he made him a tunic of many colors.”

“But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.” “Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.” “So he said to them, ‘Please hear this dream which I have dreamed.’ “There we were binding sheaves in the field.” “Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” “And his brothers said to him, ‘Shall you indeed reign over us?’ “Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?’ “So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.”

You can see, here, that Joseph was a fine and upright young man. He was rejoicing in all that the Lord had given to him. He had the special and particular love of his father, he was very concerned with doing the right thing, and so he didn’t side with his brothers, to go along with whatever laziness or evil schemes they were concocting. He even went so far as to report it to his father. He rejoiced in the spiritually prophetic dreams that God was giving to him, and he even went so far as to relate these dreams to his brothers. And so we could say that he was letting his

heart cheer him in a holy and good sense, and he was walking in the ways of his heart and the sight of his eyes, even, in a good sense.

But I think that it will be good if we can ask ourselves whether Joseph was wise to relate his dreams to his brothers? I think not. And yet these dreams were the overflow of his heart which cheered him. His brothers were not cheered by his dreams; they were cheered by the thought of killing him. They were walking in the fleshly ways of their hearts. They were rejoicing the evil of trying to get rid of him. We should understand from this that Joseph's heart was being sustained and cheered by God from his youth. And because of this rejoicing in all that God had given to him, that he came into trouble with his brothers.

He was not in trouble with God in regard to his gifts and abilities. But he would have to learn to use them wisely. God would work all of his troubles for his good, and he would not come into God's judgment, but his own brothers would judge him because he spoken to them in what they thought was a proud way, a way of superiority. And they would hate him for it. And they would attempt to take his life because of his relating his dreams. This leads us to our second point and the second example that I will give to you. We have seen the exhortation to the young man to rejoice in his youth and let his heart cheer him. Now –

2ndly – We want to see and think together of the Qualification to this Exhortation, which Solomon gives to the young man. (verse 9b)

“Rejoice, O young man in your youth.” “But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.” Solomon is saying that God will bring into judgment all those young men who followed the ways of their heart; doing what is right in the sight of their own eyes; whoever they are. We must ask then what is meant by this statement, “God will bring you into judgment?” It is obvious that it is referring to the future Day of Judgment. If you look over at verse 14 of Chapter 12, you read these words: “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.” That is what God will do on that great Day.

Every work of ours will be brought under His scrutiny for judgment, including all of those things which were secret to ourselves, we thought, but were known very well to Him. And He will judge all of these works, whether they were good or whether they are evil. We should understand that this includes Christians. It is true that when a person believes in Jesus, that they will not come into eternal judgment, but have passed out of death into life. This is expressly said by Jesus in John 5: 24. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” It is obvious, from what Jesus is saying here, that for the Christian, he will not be judged eternally and cast into hell for having walked according to the course of this world, rejoicing in the sinful ways of his heart, before he was saved. His sins are all forgiven.

But nevertheless, he will be judged. He will be evaluated according to his works; not that he would be condemned in any way. But rather, to be rewarded; to be rewarded according to his works. Look over at 2nd Corinthians 5: 7. “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according what they have done, whether good or bad.” “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust we are well known in your consciences.”

So, the unbelieving young man is warned of the coming Day of Judgment, where he will be brought into the judgment of condemnation because he walked in the sight of his own eyes, rather than acknowledging God and His will for His life. He rejoiced in sin; in the desires of the flesh and eyes and mind, and he did not ever want things to change for him, or really come to know God. The Christian young man, on the other hand, is told to rejoice in his youth; his heart

is to cheer him in the days of his youth. But his goal in living is very different from the unbelieving godless young man. He does not walk in the ways of his own sinful heart speaking to him. He is walking in the ways of his heart which has been changed through faith in Christ. He walks by faith in God and His Word, and not by sight. He is trying to please the Lord. He will be brought to the judgment seat of Christ for the evaluation of his works, but certainly not into God's judgment of eternal punishment. He will be given a reward according to his works. And this leads us in the 3rd place to –

The Conclusion – Or how the young man should apply these truths to himself.

“Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.” Both believers and unbelievers should realize that childhood and youth are vanity; they are fleeting, they are quickly passing and will soon come to an end. Solomon himself is our second example. Solomon, you will remember, when he was very young, even when he was but a child, he became king. And he prayed and he asked for wisdom to lead God's great people. And God gave it to him; wisdom to discern justice (1 Kings 3: 11). And God also gave him wisdom in regard to many earthly things, so that people sought him out to hear his wisdom.

God also gave him riches and honor. Solomon sought wisdom for what would truly last and what would be truly satisfying, and yet, he could not ultimately find it in anything that pursued, except in God Himself. It was all vanity. And so, all young men should conclude this; that it is the best possible thing that they can do, when they will put away evil from their flesh. It will bring you true joy. True joy, the kind of joy which is lasting, is often concealed from the view of the young men. When they are young it is obscured by the world and its lusts. The problem with many young men is that they sow to the world and the flesh, and they are led astray by the Devil's schemes.

They do not put away evil from their flesh, by means of repentance from every sin. They do not understand that God would bless them if they did, and it would be the greatest cause of rejoicing to them if they did do it. Instead, they often cultivate it. Solomon did not learn this lesson when he was young; even though he was given wisdom in many ways. He was a believer, and God had given him a hearing heart when he asked for it. But somewhere during the time of his kingly reign, he was led astray by all of his pursuits to find lastingly profitable pursuits in living his life. He only really learned to be lastingly wise after he had sought satisfaction from the world and riches, and not finding it, then he turned back to God.

But our text says, “Remove sorrow from your heart”. This applies to believers as well as to unbelievers. All the sins of loving the world, all the sins of the eyes and flesh are that which will inevitably lead to the sorrow if you do not repent of them. For the unbeliever it will lead to eternal death and everlasting punishment if they not repent and believe in Christ. But, in the life of the Christian young person, as well as the Christian older person, repentance ought to be seen as a daily on-going duty; putting away evil from their flesh.

Listen to 2nd Corinthians 7: 1 – “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Real rejoicing comes from being clean in your heart, and clear in your conscience, and walking before God in uprightness of heart; rejoicing in the One who thinks about you and who always evaluates you righteously. He does this for your good. Let us remember this and receive His correction where we need it, and rejoice that we can share in His holiness.