

**Ecclesiastes 12: 5; “When the Almond Tree Blossoms”, Message # 81
in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, a Bible Study
conducted By Pastor Paul Rendall on the Evening of
November 14th, 2012, at the Rendall Home.**

We are exhorted in verse 1 of this chapter to, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth”. This is both a promise of blessing, and a warning against waiting too long to serve God. Remember Him now, when you are young, rather than later when you are old, when things are sometimes very difficult. Solomon had come to know the reality of the things of which he spoke. He probably wrote this book when he was an older man, and so he now may be describing his own experience, as well as his observations concerning older people. The question we want to answer this evening is this: How can you live to God when you come to the place where your health and strength are failing and death is approaching? Let me give you 3 instructions on what to remember as you grow older.

1st of all– As you grow older, and your earthly fear of heights increases, remember that God is your keeper, and you will do well.

Verse 5 says, “Also they are afraid of height, and of terrors in the way...” The fear here is of physical heights and fears related to physical terrors as you grow older. You once could jump out of tree from about 6-8 feet up and you were not afraid. Now in your older age, you can hardly work up the courage to try. You once had no fear of working up high up on the second story of your house, cleaning out the gutters, or painting the soffits, but now when you try, it creates great fear because you now do not have the strong sense of balance that you once had. You have to be careful about every physical step that you take when you grow older, lest you fall. Now, you if you did not have to be so careful when you were young, it could become a discouragement to you, now that you are older. Let us remember that even though the body is decaying, and that we may as believers, may come to the place where we might actually physically slip or fall, that the Lord is our Helper and our Keeper. Psalm 121, verses 1-8. “I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help?” “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” “He will not allow your foot to be moved;(to slip) He who keeps you will not slumber.” “Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” “The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.” “The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.” “The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.” “The Lord shall preserve (or guard) your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.” There are some important things to take notice of here. Faith in the time of old age is very essential to counteract overt physical fears. It is not as though you do not need to have faith in exercise at all times, whether it is in your youth or your old age, but in old age it is particularly important to have it engaged. Faith is not a

blind or careless trust in God. A person could be trusting in God to preserve them, and yet they could be very careless of their ways, physically speaking. You can be a very trusting person, and yet because of foolishly thinking that you can still do what you once could do, you find yourself being hurt because you could not do it.

The same is true spiritually in regard to the keeping of your soul. If you have believed in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your eternal soul, you are indeed safe. But you might so live and act foolishly, or sinfully, that you hurt yourself very badly. You will not lose your soul, but you may dishonor God and lose your reward. But look at the faithfulness of God. “He will not allow your foot to slip, and He who keeps you will not slumber. God is the great Keeper and Preserver of your physical body and your eternal soul in all of your journeying through this life. The way that He does this is marvelous indeed. His greatest care is to preserve your soul for all of eternity, if you are one of His chosen people. He does this first of all, by preserving your physical life before you are converted to Christ. He does this secondly by saving your soul, in His good time, through your faith in Jesus Christ. And He does it thirdly by keeping your body and soul all the way through this earthly journey of yours until your die and go to heaven to be with Him. He knows that your faith needs perfecting at many points all throughout your life, and so He becomes your Keeper and Preserver throughout all of your earthly life, and into eternity. He becomes “your shade on your right hand”. He doesn’t let the sunlight to “smite” you or the moonlight to harm you. What does that mean? The physical sun hurt both Jacob and Jonah if you go back and read about them. (Genesis 31: 40 and Jonah 4: 8) The Bible tells us in picture language, in some passages, that the sun and the moon can refer to people in authority over us, people who might try to exercise hurtful authority over us. (Matthew 13: 6 and 21, Revelation 6: 12, and 16: 8) God is the preserver of His people in all such times of their lives. He is their preserver therefore, also, in the greatest of their physical afflictions, even in regard to their physical health and well-being. (Psalm 37: 23 and 24) He God is utterly and entirely faithful to those who know Him; even for those who are foolish and stupid. He is watching over you constantly and is intimately acquainted with all of your ways. (Psalm 139: 1-6)

2ndly - As you grow older you may be dismayed with your looks and fearful of traveling outside of your home, but remember God’s faithfulness to you.

These verses are talking about the “terrors in the way”; when the almond tree blossoms, when the grasshopper is a burden, and when desire fails. What can this mean? Well the almond tree blossoming is given to us here as a picture of the speed with which old age creeps up on a man, and what the old man’s hair looks like on his head. Adam Clarke says in his commentary –“ The hair begins to change, first gray, then white; it having no longer that supply of nutritive juices which it once had, this animal vegetable (the crop of hair) withers and falls off. “The almond tree, having white flowers, is a fit emblem of a hoary head; or as

Hasselquist says, who observed the tree in full flower in Judea, “like an old man with his white locks.” What is the conclusion which we should draw from this? The approaching indications of old age often takes place quickly; the time when your natural hair color changes to grey and then to white. There is not the texture or strength or fullness in the hair any longer. The “terrors in the way” refers to the increasing number of fears you experience as you grow older in relation to the things which you cannot do. As you grow very old, you become more and more afraid of all the things which could happen to you, because you are growing more weak and pained with bodily pains. These grey hairs ought to be signs to you that you should pray to God to be as obedient and useful and faithful as you possibly can while you still have the strength to do so. An unbeliever will not do this. But a believer will lay hold of the truth of Psalm 27: 1 – “The Lord is my Light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” “The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid.” A believer can continually declare this to himself, but an unbeliever does not have this Light and this Strength.

Turn with me over to Hosea 7: 8-10. “Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.” “Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; yes grey hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it.” “And the pride of Ephraim testifies to his face, but they do not return to the Lord their God nor seek Him for all this.” You can see here that Ephraim, or the ten Northern Tribes of Israel, had not repented of their sins, they had not returned to God or sought Him to have their sins forgiven and the course of their lives changed to righteousness by God’s grace. Instead they just kept on sinning hotly against God, like a cake which is baking on the coals has stayed too long on one side. This is the way that it is with some people. They continue on in their sins for a long time and they think that nothing will come of it. They continue “mixing with the unbelieving people around them”, justifying their sin to themselves and others; proudly thinking that they will be able to indefinitely hold on that way; that nothing is going to change. But they do not realize that grey hairs are upon them. The grey hairs are here and there, and yet they do not notice it. These were prophetic tokens of God’s coming judgment upon that society in that day, and they are the same tokens to our society in this day. If you know the Lord you know that there are greater terrors than those related to a person’s physical death, and you want others to come to see this before it is too late. 2 Corinthians 5: 9. “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 to what he has 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 are well known in your consciences.” The greater terror, for each person to remember, is the terror which will come upon the ungodly; all those who do not remember their Creator, to believe in His testimony concerning His Son. John 3: 36 – “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life;

and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Many folks, we are seeing, do not realize the passing of time, and suddenly they are grey-haired. And even worse, there are many people unaware of the coming judgment which will take place when they die. The terrors of the passage that we are studying are the terrors related to physical disability and physical death. An earthly minded unbelieving person thinks that the pains of these physical bodily things are the worst thing that they will ever face. And, certainly, we should understand that they will become very real for each of us. The unbeliever will address them by ignoring them, or complaining of them, or seeking treatment for them, but they will often not link their pains or their grey hairs with death and what it will mean for them to meet God. They are afraid to travel and take an earthly trip like they used to do, and in this respect the “grasshopper is a burden”. They are afraid to get on the plane; they are afraid to go on a long car trip. They used to have the desire to many earthly things in business and pleasure which they no longer have the desire to do. “Desire has failed.” They do not remember that they will soon be taking their greatest trip; the trip to meet their Maker. They forget that their Maker and their Creator is also their judge. The believer will wisely commit both body and soul to God. He does so by the exercise of faith and prayer. And when coming near to death, the believer will remember God’s faithfulness. The way that he or she addresses these terrors is to remember that all men must die, and pray to God to come to terms with it. The believer in Christ realizes that actually the spiritual realities of their having God as their Savior, and God as their helper will help allay all of their fears. Turn with me to Psalm 71, verse 9. “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.” Now look down at verse 17. “O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works.” “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 also Psalm 89, verse 1 – “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.” “For I have said, ‘Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.’”

And then finally – As you grow older, remember that you are going to your eternal home.

“For man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about in the streets.” There is an earthly home, and there is an eternal home. In the King James Version it is called your “long home”. The state in which you die will be an eternal state, an eternal home. You will eternally be in heaven or in hell after you die, depending upon whether you have remembered God or forgotten God in your lifetime. The Christian’s life is a life of remembering God; His works, His will, His ways, and especially His Person. God the Father is to be remembered for His love in sending His Son. And the Father and the Son are to be remembered for sending

the Holy Spirit to abide with believers forever. One of the greatest reasons that this great salvation has been given to you, O believer, is so that you will prepare yourself to live with God forever. The greatest reason that He was given to mankind was so that they might believe and have everlasting life. Therefore remember your Creator now while you have life and breath. You remember by believing the gospel and believing His Word. This is what will prepare you for your eternal home. 2 Corinthians 4: 16 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." "For our momentary light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Remember that death is coming for each us sometime, and it may be sooner than we think. But if we believe in Christ the life of God is in our soul. Eternity is in our heart. And whatever physical afflictions we experience are momentary in comparison with eternity, and they are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Let us look by faith on these unseen eternal things. God is in heaven, Christ is at His side, the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, the angels await to escort our soul to God when die. It is all glorious for the believer. May each of you reading this find this to be your experience when it comes your turn to die.