

## SERMON I.

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ON THE HABITUAL REMEMBRANCE OF GOD.

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ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

THE minister of a parish must naturally feel anxious for the welfare of every individual committed to his charge; but this anxiety will be felt in an increased degree for such of his flock as are exposed to peculiar danger. This, certainly, is the case with those young men who are just entering the world, and beginning to think—(what they generally think at a period much too early)—that they may now venture to act for themselves, may venture to throw off the control of masters and teachers, and even the salutary restraint of parental authority. Great, indeed, are the dangers to which they thus heedlessly expose themselves. Let me, therefore, entreat such young men to attend seriously to a few words of advice, dictated by a heartfelt desire to advance your best interests. Consider what I say as the admonition of a *friend*; of one who sincerely wishes you well, and who can have no object in view, in thus addressing you, but *your* good.

As the most effectual preservative from the many dangers to which, at your age, you are

exposed, endeavour to comply with the advice of the wise man in the text, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when ye shall say, I have no pleasure in them.* Try to maintain constantly in your heart a deep sense of the *relation* which you bear to God, and of the *duties* which you consequently owe to him. Try to keep the principal truths and obligations of religion deeply impressed upon your minds.

Remember God as your *Creator*. Consider that you were made by him; and that you owe to him, not only your life, but every comfort which you enjoy. You cannot but acknowledge that he has a clear and undoubted right to the services of that being which he has himself made. You *belong* to him, and consequently are in justice bound to make his will, his precepts and commandments, the rule, the governing principle, of your conduct.

Remember God as your *Redeemer*. When you, together with all the rest of mankind, were in a lost state through sin, God was mercifully pleased to *redeem*—to save—you from that state, by giving his Son Jesus Christ to die for your sake. *He tasted death for every man.* It is in him that *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.* Remember, therefore, that being thus redeemed—thus *bought with a price*—even the blood of the Son of God, *you are no longer your own*, are no longer at liberty to live according to your own will, according to your own appetites and desires, but are bound by every tie, both of justice and of gratitude, to live according to the will of him who has thus bought you.

Remember God as your *Sanctifier*. So weak and corrupt is the nature of man in consequence of the transgression of our first parents, that we cannot serve God acceptably without his grace, without the assistance of his Spirit. That assistance is freely offered to you if you will ask for it—if you will seek it in fervent prayer. *Ask and ye shall have*, says our Lord, *seek and ye shall find*; and he assures us, that his *heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Remember then, that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can effectually *help your infirmities*. Implore his aid to enlighten your understanding, to give strength to your good resolutions, to correct and purify your heart and affections.

Lastly, remember God as your *Judge*. Never for a moment forget that *God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness*; that *God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*: and ever remember, that he who will judge you is a Being from whom nothing can be hidden. *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* *He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways.* *There is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether.* *He even spieth out the secret thoughts and intents of the heart.* Young people sometimes venture to yield to temptations to sin, in the hope of concealment. But there is no possibility of concealing any thing from God. *If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned into day; yea, the darkness is no darkness with God, but the night is as clear as the day, the darkness and light to him are both alike.* Remember, therefore, that there is no possibility of escaping the observation of an all-seeing

Judge. If, in the high spirits of youth, you are tempted to *walk after the way of your own heart*, according to your own appetites and desires, and *after the sight of your own eyes*, yet be assured that *for all these things God will bring you into judgment.*

The keeping upon your mind of this habitual remembrance of God, will require some attention and watchfulness on your part. Both from the distractions, the cares, and the pleasures of the world, and from the waywardness of your own heart, you will be in no small danger of forgetting him. But reflect, that though you may forget God, God will not forget you; and think both on the ingratitude, and on the awful danger of forgetting him. *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.*

Make use, therefore, of every means in your power for maintaining the habitual remembrance of God upon your minds. Often employ yourselves in reading religious books, and especially in studying the holy Scriptures. It was to his early knowledge of the Scriptures, that the early piety of Timothy appears to be attributed by St. Paul; and the Psalmist speaks of the study of the word of God as being the most likely means of preserving the young and inexperienced from the temptations to which they are exposed: *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself according to thy word.* Let the Scriptures then, especially the New Testament, be often in your hand. Read them *attentively*. Read them with an earnest desire to understand them, and with a real resolution to regulate your faith and practice by what you read. When, for instance, you find any sin for-

bidden, reflect whether you have ever been guilty of that sin, and if you have been guilty of it, implore the forgiveness of God through the merits of Jesus Christ, and resolve, in humble reliance upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, that you will be guilty of it no more. If you find any duty commanded, any moral grace of character recommended and enforced, consider how far you have been diligent in the performance of such duty, or in the cultivation of such grace or virtue, or how far you have fallen short of it. Implore the divine blessing upon what you read. Beseech God to enlighten your understanding, so that you may see and know what things you ought to do, and also to give you grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.

To preserve the remembrance of God upon your mind, nothing will contribute more than the habit of private devotion. Be regular and constant in addressing yourself in prayer to the Author and Giver of all good things. Every morning when you rise to your daily occupations, and every night when you return to rest, remember to fall on your knees before God, to implore the forgiveness of your manifold transgressions, to beg of Him protection and support, the strengthening of your weakness, and the supply of your wants. And besides your more regular devotions, you should endeavour to acquire and cultivate a habit of, often in the course of the day, directing your thoughts to God, and offering to him short ejaculations of prayer and praise in all circumstances, whether of affliction and distress, or of prosperity and rejoicing. It has been well observed, that prayer is the breath of a Christian, and that it is as easy to live without breathing, as to support the Christian life without prayer.

But you must not consider private prayer alone as sufficient for the purposes of piety, but must also embrace every opportunity of joining with your fellow Christians on the Lord's day in public or social prayer. Public worship is a duty in many respects different, and resting on different grounds from private worship. It is a duty which, however it may be neglected by some, and perhaps scoffed at by others, is in itself of no little importance. You must remember, that the apostle earnestly exhorts us not to forsake the *assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is*. You must consider, that public worship tends peculiarly to promote the glory of God, and to advance his kingdom among men. You will bear in mind that public worship has always been maintained among the true servants of God, and that they have sincerely lamented the being at any time deprived of it. Be regular therefore in your attendance at church. Join in the prayers seriously and devoutly; and during the whole time that you are in the house of God, be on your guard against falling into any levity or impropriety of behaviour. It is painful to see young persons laughing and talking in church instead of attending to the service, thus distracting the attention and interrupting the devotions of those near them. Such conduct shows a want of good sense, as well as of religious principle and feeling. Those who are guilty of it should consider the holy place in which they are, and learn to show more reverence for the sanctuary of God.

Nothing however will contribute more to keeping up in your minds the habitual remembrance of God, than the devout partaking of the Lord's supper. This holy ordinance was appointed for the benefit of *all* Christians; for the *young* no less

than the old; for all, in short, who are sensible of their need of a Redeemer. It was instituted by our Saviour *in the same night in which he was betrayed*. You ought to be induced to receive it by a feeling of gratitude—by a sense of duty and obedience to the command of a dying Redeemer—and also by a regard for your own best interests, for it was appointed for the strengthening and refreshing of your souls. You are *old enough* to partake of it, if you are old enough to understand the religion which you profess; if you are old enough to believe in Jesus Christ, old enough to repent of your past sins, and steadfastly to intend to lead a Christian life for the time to come. It is true that young people are too much in the habit of neglecting the Lord's supper. But you must not *follow a multitude to do evil*. A duty does not cease to be a duty, because numbers of thoughtless beings are unmindful of it. But you should regard the partaking of the Lord's supper not merely in the light of a duty. Consider it rather as a high privilege, as constituting part of that spiritual armour of God, by which you may be enabled to overcome the peculiar temptations to which your time of life is exposed.\*

This attention to your religious duties, your thus openly arraying yourselves on the Lord's side, may perhaps expose you to observation. Those of your own age, who are themselves destitute of religious principle, and little under the influence even of common sense, will perhaps, in their thoughtlessness and folly, call you too religious and over scrupulous, will perhaps even pretend to laugh at and to make game of you. But you will

\* See a Tract, entitled, "Young Persons invited to the Lord's Table."

not be so weak and cowardly as to be prevented from doing your duty by the idle scoffing of fools and unbelievers. You will not suffer their senseless ridicule to prevent you from *holding fast by God*, from openly avowing your allegiance to your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Sanctifier. You have been enlisted, and solemnly engaged, to fight manfully under the banner of Christ, against sin, the world, and the devil. You must not be so unmanly as to *desert* that banner. Remember the words of our Lord, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* And, on the other hand, *Whosoever shall confess me while on earth, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

And let not any one try to persuade you, that the habitual remembrance of God, the constant attention to religion which I have been recommending, will tend to throw a gloom over you, and to check that cheerfulness which, at your age, is so natural and engaging. So far from being an enemy to cheerfulness, religion would encourage and promote it, but encourage it on its only proper foundation, the love of God, and a well-grounded hope in his mercy. You have, I trust, more sense, than to be advocates for a cheerfulness which is founded upon ignorance, thoughtlessness, and irreligion. Religion has the promise of this world, as well as of that which is to come; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Religion will promote your happiness both here and hereafter. May God fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

*The Prayer.*

O God, who dwellest in the highest heavens, yet beholdest all the things that are done upon earth, grant that we may never forget that nothing is hidden from thy all-seeing eye. Make us seriously to consider, that thou our God art ever present with us; that thou beholdest all our actions; hearest all our words; and that the very secrets of our hearts are not hid from thee; that thou notest in thy book whatsoever we think, speak, or do now; and wilt for all these things bring us to judgment, at the great and terrible day of his appearing. Enable us to set thee always before us, to remember and acknowledge thee in all our ways, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Texts to be committed to memory.*

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when ye shall say, I have no pleasure in them. *Eccles. xii. 1.*

Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find. *Luke xi. 9, 10.*

God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness. *Acts xvii. 31.*

God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. *Eccles. xii. 14.*

All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. *Heb. iv. 13.*

He is about our path, and about our bed, and

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spieth out all our ways. There is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether. *Psa. cxxxix. 2, 3.\**

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. *Psa. ix. 17; l. 22.*

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself according to thy word. *Psa. cxix. 9.*

Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. *Heb. x. 25.*

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. *Mark viii. 38.*

Whosoever shall confess me while on earth, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. *Matt. x. 32.*

\* Let young people learn this psalm by heart.

SERMON II.

THE YOUNG MAN'S DUTY TO HIS PARENTS.

EPH. vi. 2, 3.

Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee.

NEXT to the fear and the love of God, no duty has a stronger claim to the attention and observance of young men than the duty which they owe to their parents.

This duty is founded on the common feelings and instincts of nature. As nature inclines almost all animated beings to nourish and provide for their offspring, so long at least as they need their care, and fondly to watch over and protect them, so it is natural that their offspring should become attached to their parents, as soon as they are so far advanced in growth to be sensible of their kindness and affection. Such attachment to parents should especially be felt by man, who stands at the head of the animal creation, and whose reason should direct and give strength to the salutary instincts and teaching of nature.

You to whom I address myself should reflect, that as your parents have been, under Providence, the authors of your being, so they nourished and watched over you in the helplessness of infancy and childhood. Consider how hard they have