

Rejoice in Your Youth (2)

Rev. C. Hanko

Ecclesiastes 11:9: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

In a previous article we discussed the negative aspect, the warning implied in this Word of God; now we consider the positive aspect, the encouragement.

You are told: Rejoice, O young man, O young woman, in your youth. This is the time for exuberant joy, for thankfulness, for singing the praises of your God! Do it now, this special time soon passes by, you have the future before you!

You are reaching out toward maturity. The things that you learned by rote when you were a child now begin to take on real meaning. God has given you a strong, healthy body, full of vim and vigor. He has given you a sound mind to search out the amazing wonders of His creation. Wherever you turn you discover something new, either in the field of history, or geography, or science, or literature, or mathematics, or mechanics. You stand amazed at something new every day.

But the greatest wonder of all is that you know God as your God and Father, and Jesus as your Savior. You realize that you were born in God's covenant, of Christian parents, reared in a home where Christ is Lord.

You are aware that you were conceived and born in sin, no different from the pagan in the jungles of Africa, or the child reared in the slums of New York, or any other child born and reared in a godless home. It was your special privilege to have your education and training in a Christian school and the church where the truth of God's Word is preached and taught. Along with all that, you know that you are not your own, but belong to your faithful Savior Jesus Christ. You confess along with your fellow believers: "All that I have belongs, not to me, but to my God."

This is God's world that we live in, His wonderful creation. You see the firmament as His handiwork, and hear all creation singing His praises. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows wisdom.

You yourself are God's handiwork, that is, custom-made, as it were. There is only one of you, for God gave you your body, your mind, your soul and your strength, that you may take your place in God's church, and serve your unique purpose according to the gifts and talents God has given you.

You have the Spirit and life of Christ in your heart, whereby you hold the highest position anyone can hold in this world, far above rulers and princes. You hold the office of believers as God's prophet, priest and king, to know, love, and serve Him in love. You are a steward in God's Temple, entrusted with all these means to serve Him in your daily walk of life, living to His glory.

Prayerfully you take your place in the church as an active believer by making confession of your faith; you choose your vocation and your future life mate, confident that God will direct your way from day to day.

All this, Scripture tells you, means that you possess an inner joy, which is unspeakable, even the beginning of the eternal blessedness. It is a beginning, not in the sense of the beginning

of a long trip, but rather the kernel out of which grows our eternal joy in heaven. Just as a beautiful flower emerges from a small seed, or a mighty oak grows from a mere acorn, so also our eternal joy follows out of our foretaste in this present life.

Exactly for that reason the Word of God urges you to rejoice in your youth by making the brightness of your inner joy radiate upon your face and over your whole person.

You do that, first of all, by “walking in the ways of your heart.” Remember that this is your regenerated heart, from which are all the issues of life. This requires a constant watchfulness against the sin that so readily corrupts our thoughts, words, actions or deeds. Our prayer must be: “Guard Thou my thoughts, I Thee implore, and of my lips keep Thou the door; nor leave my sinful heart to stray where evil footsteps lead the way.” And when we do sin we must sincerely seek forgiveness through the cross of our Savior.

This also includes that the love of God and the love of the neighbor impel us moment by moment. We must seek to carry out God’s will, to be content in His way, and to seek His glory at home, at school, or wherever we are, in order to be a good influence to others and seek their welfare.

God also urges us “to walk in the sight of our eyes.” The book of Proverbs says: “Let thine eyes look right on.” Elsewhere Proverbs warns against an eye that seeks riches or that turns to a strange woman. The sanctified heart must control our eye, lest it be drawn or wander toward sin. We must be ready at all times to turn our eye from evil.

On the other hand, our eye must be fixed upon God and His Christ, seeking all our expectation from above. The eye is given us to search the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation. It is a most essential instrument in serving our God and living to His glory as His friend-servants.

My son and daughter, this is “the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” We can sum it all up in the words of the apostle Paul: “Rejoice in the Lord!”

Our incentive is, that “for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” This life is not an end in itself, but is a preparation for future glory.

God’s promise is that He “will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom. 2:6,7).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil.” Christ will be our Judge. He regards us, not as we are in ourselves, but as His redeemed and sanctified saints. Your and my works are burned like straw and stubble, but His work in and through us receives an eternal reward of heavenly life and blessedness.

Our reward is the reward of grace: “Well done, ye good and faithful servants. Come, ye blessed, and inherit the kingdom!” Rejoice, young man and young woman, in your youth!

“Rejoice in the Lord; again I say, rejoice!”

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