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1887

A BACCALAUREATE SERMON.

YOUTH:
ITS IMPORTANCE, PERILS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

BY REV. W. C. ROBERTS, D.D. LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF LAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY.

Delivered at Lake Forest, Ill., June 19, 1887.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

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GEO. K. HAZLITT & Co., PRINTERS, 172 AND 174 CLARK ST.

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PSALM 144: 12.—“*That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.*”

The precise occasion which called out this prayer of David is not positively known. From the tenor of the petition, “Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children,” we infer that it was the influx of a large number of foreigners into Palestine, or the adoption by the people of heathen customs during a season of general peace and friendly relations. Whatever may have been the occasion, it caused the King to fear that influences were coming in that would interfere with the spiritual growth of the young, injure the morals of society and undermine the most important pillars of his theocratic kingdom. In view of this, he cried to God for aid. He begged of him to rescue the land and to deliver its people out of the hand of the strangers whose mouth spoke vanity and whose right hand was the right hand of falsehood, that the sons of the chosen people might be as plants grown up in their youth, and that their daughters might be as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace.

It is implied in the context that the King felt sure that the false views and the corrupt practices of the strangers would prove contagious, and in the highest degree dangerous to the young. He knew well the strength of the imitative faculty and the ease with which it impels those who are in early life to follow the examples set before them. He was satisfied that the youth of his kingdom would adopt the strangers’ principles, imbibe their spirit, and walk in their ways. The probable

effect of this upon the spiritual interests of the nation filled his heart with alarm.

It is further implied in the context that the psalmist as king, parent, guardian and prophet, felt that he was under obligation to care for the morals of the young. In that matter he has left a noteworthy example to all coming ages. Not many kings deem it incumbent upon them to pray God to rid their countries of incomers whose bad example is certain to corrupt the minds of the people; thousands of parents fail to protect their children against the contaminating influences of wicked associates; most guardians satisfy themselves that their responsibilities end with their care of the property and the intellectual training of their wards; and the sentiment is gaining ground—happily not here—that the Professors of our Colleges and Universities have nothing to do with the moral character of their students.

The conduct of David as set forth in this psalm is a severe rebuke to all these classes of men. He shows that he regarded it as his unquestioned duty to carry the youth of his kingdom to God's throne, and to pray that they might be kept from the corrupting influences to which they were exposed. He did this under the profoundest conviction that the moral character of the young was of the utmost importance to the perpetuation and prosperity of his kingdom. If their character could be kept pure, upright and godlike, the future of the land would be safe, even after the fathers had gone to their rest.

The subject to which I invite your attention is *Youth*—its importance, its perils, and its opportunities.

In many respects *youth is the most important period of human life.*

First, *because it is the entrance into life*—the starting point of an endless career of weal or of woe. As the whole of our present life is a preparation for an entrance into the higher life of the world to come—the ante-chamber of the eternal temple or the prison of despair—so is youth the season of preparation for future success or failure—the ante-chamber of an honorable or miserable life. Observation and experience continue to confirm the truthfulness of Wordsworth's aphorism

that "the boy is father to the man." In nearly every case the foundation of future success or failure is laid in early life, in the home or in the school. The skilled artisan who is usually entrusted with the construction of the important parts of every work of art, was a dutiful son, a diligent student, and a faithful apprentice; the princely merchant who handles his millions and manages interests that encircle the globe was in early life the bright boy who promptly attended to his mother's behests and swept the store so well that he attracted the attention alike of customer and proprietor; the president or manager of the great railroad is the man whose boyhood was marked by quickness of perception and promptness of execution; the great statesman who is to-day controlling the destinies of nations was in early life a hard plodder and diligent reader; and the ripe christian whose closing days are brilliant with sunset clouds that are radiant with heavenly light, was in boyhood the believing child of the covenant, the apt Sabbath-school scholar and the consistent church member.

Youth is the most important period of life, also, because it is that in which men form their habits. Habit is one's second nature, the law of his condition, which is sure to prove a help or a hindrance in the great conflicts of life. Habit renders stable that which has been fluctuating, pleasant that which has been painful, strong that which has been weak, easy that which has been difficult and morally certain that which has been doubtful. Hence, it is safe to predict that the future pathway of the youth who forms correct and virtuous habits will be gilded with light brighter than that of noon-day, and that the future of him who forms vicious and degrading habits will be darker than a starless night.

Few in youth realize the importance of forming good habits. If a young man grow up thoughtful, pure in heart and life, industrious, truthful and punctual, his future, no matter what may be his circumstances, will be honorable and useful. Such an one is very seldom led astray in later life. The habits which he forms in youth prove his safeguards by gathering around him influences which, like munitions of rocks, protect his paths. It is not often, on the other hand, that an idle, wasteful,

untruthful and intemperate youth is brought to lead a life of industry, frugality, truthfulness, and sobriety. In his thoughtful moments, even such an one may at times resolve upon a reformation, but his bad habits like strong cables will keep him to his old ways and fasten him to his wicked associates.

Youth, moreover, is the most important period of life because it is the period of strength and action. The comparison in the text between youth and plants implies *strength*. The apostle John tells young men that he writes to them, because "they are *strong*." At this time of life their heart is brave, their hope bright, their step firm and their motion rapid. If they are on the downward grade, with what velocity do they reach the bottom! If on the upward grade, they soon reach the summit in spite of difficulties and dangers. The history of the past furnishes us with numberless examples of men who, before reaching years of maturity, performed many noble deeds of daring, accomplished important feats of statemanship, and composed treatises that will outlast the ages. A mere stripling, the son of Jesse, slew the giant of the Philistines and turned the tide of war in favor of God's people. Hannibal was but twenty years of age when he led to victory the armies of Carthage. Alexander the Great had mastered the known world before he was five and thirty years old. The first Napoleon was but a beardless youth when he led his brilliant campaigns in Italy, routed the forces of Austria, and exacted from the house of Hapsburgh peace on his own terms. John Calvin was hardly of age when he penned his immortal Institutes. Bolingbroke and Pitt were ministers of State before the majority of young men receive their diplomas from college, and the latter was Prime Minister of England before he was twenty-five.

Many look upon these extraordinary cases as illustrations of mere chance! But there is no such thing as chance. The idea is heathen. Christianity teaches us that the principles of the divine government connect men's lives and actions with all the results that flow from them. The farmer who neglects the cultivation of the soil in spring is sure to reap the results of his negligence. The merchant who disregards the conditions

of commercial success will be sure to feel the consequences of his folly, to his disappointment if not confusion. In like manner, the youth who habitually neglects the cultivation of his heart, the formation of good habits, and attention to the commands of God will inevitably come to grief.

Youth, in the second place, is a period of peril. A conviction of this led the psalmist to pray, "Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children." It is more than probable that those for whom he prayed had very little apprehension of their danger. The young are always reluctant to accept the result of others' experience; they insist on trying the experiment for themselves. Even when they yield to the judgment of parents or friends, they entertain a secret conviction that, by so doing, they are depriving themselves of pleasures which others, not so ready to bow to authority enjoy. The increase of wealth and the advancement of science have largely augmented these perils. Instead of the gross indulgences of past ages which would repel the cultured youth of our day, we have the refined and seductive ones, but they are no less insidious and corrupting.

Among the perils which threaten youth from *within*, the first is the native depravity of their own heart. David tells us that he was born in iniquity and conceived in sin. Observation and experience unite in emphasizing the fact that all have gone out of the way, and become estranged from God and righteousness. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their nature is tainted with sin, and their will is not obedient to the Divine commands. In spite of the amiability of temper, sweetness of disposition, and purity of life in the case of many, there is underneath and back of all these "a heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

In addition to this taint of native depravity common to all, there is found in many a hereditary predisposition to this and that indulgence ruinous to the interests of the soul. It is a conceded fact that tastes, appetites, and affections descend from father to son. The descendants of drunkards and debauchees receive not only a depraved nature, but also an inherited tendency to the vices of their fathers. We have seen

as many as three or four generations of gormandizers, inebriates and debauchees. Thus impure streams flow down from generation to generation to pollute the already turbid springs of youth.

The imagination, also, is a source of peril. At this time of life it is especially strong and difficult to control. It wanders at will through forbidden fields in spite of the bit and bridle used to check it. Its constructive power is amazing. Out of the most meagre materials it makes a paradise that vies with that of Mohammed, or digs a dungeon that compares in dreariness with the land of despair. All its creations are reflections of the soul's tendencies. That of Byron tints everything it touches with the bewitching hues of sensuality; that of Shelley puts its apples of gold in gilded pictures of infidelity; and that of Shakespeare sets forth its characters in the strong and variegated lights of jealousy, or the loose customs of the age. The imagination paints the inner emotions of the heart as well as the outward actions of life. It depicts the joys of the drunkard, the sensations of the novel reader, and the excitement of the theatre, or of the house of the strange woman. This tends to delude the mind and pollute the heart. "Low images presented to the mind," says President M'Cosh, "will incite mean motives. Lustful pictures will foment licentious purposes, which will hurry the individual when occasion presents itself and permits, into the commission of the deed. Gloomy thoughts will give downward bend and look, and darken with their hues the brightest prospects which life can disclose. Envious or malignant thoughts will sour the spirit and embitter the temper."

Moreover, the love of pleasure is a source of peril. The heart in youth dances to every note of gayety and mirth. It is a principle of our nature to seek pleasure, and there is no harm in it, so long as it is kept within legitimate bounds. It must be rational and occasional, and not sensual and habitual. Differences of opinion are entertained, however, as to where the highest pleasures are to be found. Solomon, who had abundant opportunities to taste all the streams of earthly pleasure, tells us that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and

that all her paths are paths of peace; that length of days is in her right hand and in her left hand riches and honor. The young do not generally accept this decision of the wise man. The lovers of amusements and sensuous indulgences imagine that they have far better times than those who frequent the sanctuary and walk in the ways of holiness. The thousands who have no higher aim in life than to eat, to drink and to be merry congratulate themselves on their exemption from the drudgery of the office, or the hard study of the college, overlooking the fact that for all these God will call them to judgment. Students who find their highest pleasure in freedom from work, and the indulgence of their appetites, often pity their classmates who devote ten or twelve hours a day to poring over dry books, not knowing that a single drop of the pleasure arising from performing one's duty, conquering difficulties, or standing at the head of the class, is worth more than rivers of the pleasure arising from ease and self-indulgence. "Mere sensuous pleasure," says old Thomas Brooks, "is a beautiful harlot sitting in her chariot, whose four wheels are pride, gluttony, lust and idleness. The two horses are prosperity and abundance; the two drivers are indolence and security; her attendants and followers are guilt, late repentance and, often, death and ruin."

Youthful lusts are a source of peril. Paul exhorts Timothy to flee youthful lusts. They are of two kinds, namely, lusts of the body and lusts of the soul. All the appetites and propensities of our lower nature are peculiarly strong at this time of life. Constant watchfulness and unabated effort are demanded to keep them from turning the young from the path of usefulness and honor into that of wickedness and shame. Then, lusts of the soul in the shape of ambition often lead the noblest youth to disregard the demands of God and the rights of men; in the shape of ostentation, to extravagance and financial ruin; or in the shape of covetousness, into dishonesty and positive penury. The danger in this direction cannot be exaggerated. No warning from the pulpit can be too loud and no entreaty from the home too importunate. The sick-bed and insane asylum, the hospital and workhouse, the prison and the pre-

mature grave unite in emphasizing the apostle's injunction to "flee youthful lusts."

The appetites of the body, are a source of peril. I shall dwell only on the craving for strong drink. One would suppose that a man of upright tendencies and high scholarship would never allow himself to become a slave to an indulgence so degrading, but experience proves that this is not so. All of you know the superior scholarship and miserable end of Richard Porson. With a memory able to retain everything he read, with a faculty that enabled him to impersonate any author Greek or Roman, or in the broken parchment of faded manuscript to perceive instinctively what Tacitus, Æschylus or Pindar intended to say, with a wit that drew around him the scholars and nobles of a realm, he so completely degraded himself by the use of wine, that he was cast out of the exalted circle of which he was the centre and the circumference. Scotland has never had a poet that charmed the hardy yeomanry of the Highlands and the Lowlands like Robert Burns—master alike of its pathos, humor and chivalry. But, alas! even that bird of Paradise, as he has been called, descended from such flights as that of "Mary in Heaven" to the fume and filth of the lowest grog-shops in the realm. "Once a year," says Dr. Guthrie, "a pale and haggard man bearing the title of minister appears before the bar of his church. Not daring to look up, he bends there with his head buried in his hands, blushes on his face, his lips quivering, and a hell raging—burning within him as he thinks of home, a broken hearted wife, and the little ones so soon to leave him to shelter their innocent heads as best they may." If the honor of being the foremost scholar in the United Kingdom could not keep Porson from disgrace; if the privilege of being the idol of a cultivated people could not keep Burns from the company of drunkards; and if the constant handling of the sacred vessels of the sanctuary could not save a christian minister from disgrace and ruin, then, in the name of God, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

The perils of youth from *without* come mainly from three sources, namely, from wicked associates, bad books, and low

places of amusement. The social or gregarious element is particularly strong in the young. They are sure to seek companions; and they do it frequently before they possess discrimination to select the right kind. Too often, alas! they attract to themselves the indolent and largely depraved, who in time drag them into the cesspools of sin. These usually begin their wicked work by assailing with sneers the credulity of those who are pious and their willingness to obey all the counsels of parents and friends. They urge them to enjoy themselves to the full, intimating that they have but one life to live; to pursue the course which their own inclinations suggest, telling them that these have been implanted by God; not to allow home counsels or the anticipation of a coming judgment to interfere with their youthful pleasures, insinuating that home advice and Bible warnings should be regarded by men in college as belonging only to children; and to pay but little attention to the rules and the requirements of the church, but to eat the forbidden fruit, resting assured that they will not die, but will be wiser and happier for doing so. The moment they succeed in injecting these poisonous sentiments into the mind, they find but little trouble in leading whithersoever they will.

Another source of peril is bad books. In some respects, these are worse than wicked companions, because they are more accessible at all times and more secretly consulted. Ours is an age of newspapers, periodicals, novels, and ponderous volumes on all kinds of subjects. Three classes of books are fruitful sources of evil. The first consists of low works of fiction. I have said "low" advisedly, because I do not regard all books of fiction as bad. Some of them may be safely put into the hands of our sons and daughters to teach them morals and show them how many promising youths have been wrecked in gay society. Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to allege that a vast number of them are injurious. These vitiate the taste, debase the intellect and demoralize the conduct. The constant reading of them tends inevitably to weaken the understanding, sensualize the affections, and subject the noblest

powers of the soul to the control of a heated if not corrupt imagination.

The second class of bad books consist of those which teach principles and sentiments subversive of the truths of Scripture. Of this class there are three kinds. First, that which openly assails the foundations of Christianity, as for example the works of Paine, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, Ingersoll. For the most part these are so coarse that they carry with them their own cure to men and women of culture. They probably do less harm than those which open their guns upon the citadels of truth from masked batteries. The second kind of books is that which is written by scientific men of infidel views. Instead of gathering facts, and establishing principles—the true vocation of scientists—these men feel called upon to parade hypotheses and theories, and to show how they conflict with what is taught in the Bible. Occasionally men like Prof. Draper bring up facts of science to discredit the mummeries of Popery, the excrescences of the Greek church, and the fungi of Protestantism, as though they were claimed by Christians to be the Revelation of God. There is, also, a class of books which profess to be simple expositions of the teachings of nature, but which are in reality nothing but sophistries of would-be scientists. Their authors resort to sneers rather than to arguments to show that the teachings of the Bible are false. The brilliancy of their style, the boldness of their assertions, and the sublimity of their pretensions often pass among the young and unlearned for real ability and high scientific attainments; whereas, in fact, many of them have no standing whatever among truly scientific men.

The third class of bad books is that which contains insinuations and covert expressions intended to excite doubt and undermine faith. The great majority of our youth would never think of studying the ponderous volumes of metaphysicians on pantheism or materialism, but they drink in with avidity the equally dangerous doctrines of materialism or agnosticism when sweetened and rendered palatable by our periodical writers. "This whole field of literature" says the late Henry Ward Beecher, "is waving with unexampled luxuriance of

flower and vine and fruit; but the poisonous flower everywhere mingles with the pure, and the deadly cluster lays its cheek on the wholesome grape; nay, in the same cluster grow both the harmless and the hurtful berry, so that the hand can hardly be stretched out to gather flower or fruit, without coming back poisoned, paralyzed, leprous!"

A still more dangerous class is that which abounds in impure thoughts and vulgar expressions. This may be divided into the openly obscene, and the artfully insinuating—both intended to excite the imagination and rouse the passions. In spite of the efforts put forth by the society for the suppression of obscene books, thousands of this kind find their way into the trunks and pockets of young men and young women in our schools and colleges. Even this pestiferous class of books is less dangerous than such poetic works as those of Swinburne and Byron. For impurity secreted under a profusion of beauty or sandwiched between snow-white lilies, is like a murderous friend who mingles deadly poison with the sweet delicacies intended to tempt the appetite. The doses may be smaller and therefore slower in their work of destruction, but they are none the less certain of accomplishing the end.

The last source of danger is the *theatre* and its affiliated places of amusement. In late years, the question has often been raised whether or not the theatre is bad in itself, or *per se*. It is not necessary to discuss this point, for it is sufficient to say that the theatre is never without its connections, and all put together are evil and only evil continually. It is contended by a few that the theatre is a school of morals. It may be a school of morals in the sense that the reformatory school and the penitentiary, the gallows and the guillotine are schools of morals. If we concede for a moment that it is a school of morals, how does it happen that the teachers in it, with rare exceptions, never learn their own lessons? Why is it that even the best of them take no, or very little, part in enterprises intended to advance public morals? How is it that so many of those who are pure and honorable among them never allow their families to receive an education in their own school? As for the other claims, that the theatre is the best

place in which to study human nature, or to learn oratory, I have only to say that it is not equal to the workshop, the court-room or the pulpit. The stilted elocution of the stage could never enforce upon the heart and conscience the terrible realities of eternity, convince a hard-headed jury, or rouse the spirit of patriotism in a crowd at a political meeting. The style is obsolete, and not at all fitted to the practical demands of the present day. It may excite the nerves, affect the sensibilities, and rouse the passions, but its tendency is to destroy that delicacy of feeling which is the bulwark of chastity and virtue, and to extinguish all love for business and religion.

The opportunities of youth are great. "To everything," says Solomon, "there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

All of you may have read of the sculptor who invited a few lovers of art to see the statues of gods he had in his studio. One of these attracted special attention. Its face was concealed by a thick bushy hair and each of its feet had wings. When asked to give the name of this curious deity, the sculptor answered—"that is *Opportunity*." "Why is its face concealed?" "Because men seldom know him when he comes to them." "Why has he wings on his feet?" "Because he is soon gone, and once gone, can not be overtaken." "There are moments," says Dean Alford, "which are worth more than years. A stray, unthought-of five minutes may contain the event of a life." This is specially true in religion. "They that seek me early," says God, "shall find me." The opportunities to find him are numerous in early life. It is not to be inferred from this, however, that the aged have no opportunity to find Him. At times, the Lord magnifies the riches of his grace by drawing one and another into his service at the close of a long and wasted life. There is nothing in his purposes, nothing in the conditions of salvation, and nothing in the mission of the Spirit to exclude any that may have stepped over a given line. At wide intervals opportunities are

afforded this and that one in advanced years to give God even their blighted affections and worn out hearts. When the world fails to fill the soul and the experience of sixty years has pronounced all earthly things vanity and vexation of spirit, an invitation comes to turn their trembling steps from its broken cisterns to the fountain of living waters. When men have become convinced by long and hard experience that earth has no pillow without its thorns, the soft whispers now and then reach their ears—"Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast."

When aged fathers turn from their shattered fortunes and gay, thoughtless mothers from their confined babes, the arms of infinite love are outstretched to receive them. The poet has correctly put in verse the teachings of scripture on this subject,—

"As long as life its term extends,
Hope's blest dominion never ends;
For while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

Nevertheless, there is no passage in the Bible in which old age is said to be *the time* to seek the Lord. Reason tells us that it is far easier, as well as far more reasonable, to give God youth with its glistening dew, its first-fruits, its full powers, its noble impulses, and its fresh affections.

Observation assures us that as a matter of fact, few only seek and find the Lord in old age, however numerous the opportunities afforded them. "I made an examination," says the late Dr. Spencer, "of the time of life at which 253 hopeful conversions in my congregation took place. Of the two hundred and fifty-three, there were converted under twenty years of age, one hundred and thirty-eight; between twenty and thirty years of age, eighty-five; between thirty and forty, twenty-two; between forty and fifty, four; between fifty and sixty, three; between sixty and seventy, one—just *one*; beyond seventy, *not one!*" What a warning to those who are not seizing in youth the opportunities afforded them to seek the Lord! The experiment of that distinguished pastor should be heralded everywhere. It contains facts which every student

should be acquainted with before he leaves school or college. Here they are—if he delay coming to Christ until he is twenty years old, he has lost more than half the probabilities of coming which he had at twelve! If he delay coming until he is thirty years old, he has lost three-fourths of the probabilities of salvation which he had at *twenty!* If he delay until he is forty years old, only twenty-nine probabilities out of a thousand remain to him! If he delay until he is fifty years of age, there remain to him only fourteen out of a thousand! What a solemn warning!

Opportunities are afforded in youth not only to seek the Lord, but, also, to develop the powers indispensably necessary to perform well the duties of life. The leisure, the quick discernment, the retentive memory and the eager curiosity which render the mind capable of development and discipline belong almost exclusively to youth. If one has neglected his early education he cannot acquire it late in life; if he has put off learning a branch of business, or a difficult trade, until he has passed middle age he will never be able to master its details. No one can become efficient, thoroughly useful, or perhaps truly happy as a Christian, unless he begins in youth to serve the Lord. Religion has its duties for those who are about to enter life; and upon the right performance of these depends the preparation necessary for the higher and nobler duties of more advanced years and old age. Christian life is valuable only for what men make out of it, and do with it. Faith in God may mint it into precious currency bearing the image and superscription of the King of Kings; fidelity to duty may make it resplendent with loveliness, and more precious than rubies; brotherly kindness may convert its discords and distractions into harmony and peace; and charity may mould it into shapes as beautiful as the pity of the good Samaritan, or as cheering as the ministry of a Howard or a Florence Nightingale.

What you make of the precious life given you, my young friends, depends largely on what you do now: “The artist,” using the figure of another, “who has a block of marble put into his hands that he may shape out of it a Niurod or an angel,

may defer to do anything, till to him, though he shapes no Nimrod out of it, the block is worthless." So, only worse, it may be with you who are not busily engaged in shaping your life aright. The block put into your hands is crumbling. Every moment chips off a minute fragment, and, already, perhaps its integrity is gone. It is full time for you to determine between the Nimrod and the angel.

In youth opportunities are afforded, also, to fortify one's self against those dangers in life which I have already hinted at. Without God's guidance and the support of religion, the young enter the world as vessels go out to sea with their sails spread to every breeze, but without a chart, without a rudder and without a pilot, to be tossed to and fro on its angry waves and to fight with the storm, liable at any moment to be dashed on some hidden rock or be swallowed up by a treacherous eddy. Entering life with a lively imagination, with impulses strong, oft-times impetuous, with expectations eager and lofty, with a reason not yet strengthened by years of experience, and a judgment undisciplined by cares and trials, youth are in danger of being carried away by the allurements of the world. Nothing will render them safe but early piety, extending its influence to the understanding, the affections and the will.

Young men and women of the University, Academy, and Ferry Hall:—I close by asking a question which I hope you, Seniors, will carry with you to the broad world you are about to enter; and you, undergraduates, to the vacation you are about to take; it is this: Have you as yet sought and found the Lord? If you have not, seek him now, resolve to find him before you go forth. Choose him this moment to be the guide of your youth. You will run a terrible risk if you enter upon the cares and conflicts of the world without God. "Every day that you live makes it," in the words of another, "less likely that you will find him." Every day that you live puts another shackle on your wrist and another fetter on your foot. Every day that you live takes away some of the power of resolving, and takes away some motive to resolve. Every day adds to the heap of wasted hours that you will carry regretfully with you to your graves, if *ever* you give the trust of

your spirits, the love of your hearts, and the obedience of your lives to Christ. There are men in this community, perhaps in this congregation, who would give all that they are worth for that power of choosing a course for their lifetime, which you, young man and young woman, have to-day—who would give up all that they are worth to tear up the scroll of past years that is written with the record of their godlessness and transgression—who would give all that they are worth for one return of the early childish days when the heart was plastic and soft to receive impressions—when the conscience was sensitive to respond to the voice of God, and when long persistence in the attitude of rejection had not so stiffened the will as to make the opening of the long-clenched hand all but impossible.

“Now, whilst your days are in their bud and blossom—now, whilst your hearts have not learnt all the deceitfulness of sin—now, whilst your natures have not been corrupted by much knowledge of evil—now, whilst the world all about you is beautiful with the mysterious light of early days—now, whilst the heart, and will, and habit are all ready to be molded aright—now, whilst you have life before you that may be made sacred and beautiful, wise and righteous, full of Christ and love for men,” *seek the Lord.*



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