

In Time or Too Late by Tricia Berg

*Remember your Creator
in the days of your youth,
before the days of trouble come
and the years approach when you will say,
"I find no pleasure in them"—
before the sun and the light
and the moon and the stars grow dark,
and the clouds return after the rain;"*
Ecclesiastes 12:1-2

Later on in that passage, the author says:

*Remember God—before the silver cord is severed,
and the golden bowl is broken;
before the pitcher is shattered at the spring,
and the wheel broken at the well,
and the dust returns to the ground it came from,
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*
Ecclesiastes 12:6-7

The writer of Ecclesiastes was Solomon, who was the wisest man in the entire land, by the grace of God. (1 Kings 4:29-31) His depressing message throughout the book about the lack of meaning in various aspects of life (such as accumulating wealth) concludes with one of hope. Not only our happiness, but the entire point of our existence and our eternal destiny depends upon understanding this truth:

*Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.*

*For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*

So if we accept the ways of of our Creator God and seek to acknowledge and honor Him in all we do, all will be well. He delights in blessing us, but no matter what calamity may befall us, no matter how bad things feel or appear, we can be assured that He will make good come out of it. This is true whether we can see and understand it during our earthly life or not. How we react to temptations and trials that come our way is what is important--that is how we prove our faith to be genuine and it gives us the opportunity to honor God even when the going is rough. He sees and appreciates our efforts, which will be rewarded--not with salvation, which is free, but as He sees fit when Jesus judges how we made use of our lives after coming to the knowledge of the truth (salvation). If we believe and are saved, but spent our life "building upon the sand," then we will suffer loss of reward.

Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are

being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:8-11

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:3-9

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him. John 5:22-23

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

*The nations raged,
but Your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear Your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”
Revelation 11:18*

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy." "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done." Revelation 22:10-12

The most important way we can show God that we recognize His sovereignty is to accept His Son as our Savior and Lord. If we don't do this, then we have failed utterly and miserably--there is no hope for us, having rejected the ONLY Hope. All else that we do is

worthless and negated by the one grave error. We were made for God's good pleasure. The Bible tells us that He takes no pleasure in anyone without faith or who turns back after committing to follow Him and His ways.

[Jesus, the light of the world] was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 1 John 1:10-13

Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Acts 4:11-12

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame." Romans 10:9-11

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. John 3:36

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? Matthew 16:26

Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. For, "In just a little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay." And, "But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back." But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved. Hebrews 10:36-39

God permits us the ability to refuse Him, as we have sadly proven over and over again in every conceivable way. Solomon has more words of wisdom on this subject:

Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins. Ecclesiastes 29 This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes. Ecclesiastes 7:20, 29

And so God, in His infinite, amazing love, chose to send His one and only begotten Son to rescue us from ourselves. We are born sinful--not one could ever overcome that natural inclination to sin and strive against God, but yet the punishment for sin is death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:22-24

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8

EVERY knee will bow to Jesus and EVERY tongue will confess that He ALONE is Lord. It is just a matter of when. Will it be while there is still time to receive the free reward of eternal life or will it be too late? We need to humble ourselves and recognize that God is God and we are not--His ways are higher than ours and absolutely perfect and just. Any idea we may have of pride, arrogance or criticism towards God is utterly misplaced. Our opinions will not change the facts, which will eventually become apparent to all.

It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God." So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Romans 14:11-12

*"Turn to Me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.
By myself I have sworn;
from My mouth has gone out in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
'To Me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear allegiance.'
Only in the LORD, it shall be said of Me,
are righteousness and strength;
to Him shall come and be ashamed
all who were incensed against Him."
Isaiah 45:22-24*

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on

earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philipians 2:5-11

Satan called God a liar and Eve bought his lie. Adam trusted the judgment of his wife instead of trusting in what God had said. Will you choose to call God a liar or put your trust in someone else, or will you believe God and bow your knee and confess with your tongue now that Jesus is Lord and humbly accept God's ONLY way to avoid eternal destruction? There will come a moment in time for each person when it is too late. They WILL see that Jesus IS Lord and submit to Him, but that knowledge and surrender will not save them. If you haven't already done so, do it now!

In addition to other believers as witnesses to the truth, God gave us His holy word and nature to bear out His existence, the fact that He created everything and His plan for humanity. None of us have any excuse to deny knowing God is real. In America, our very nation was founded by Christians and generations of us have reaped the blessings of their faithfulness to the Lord. The Bible is freely available, if we only care enough to make the time to read or even listen to it. We have all been the recipients of God's goodness and have no idea what it is like to be completely without His blessings, but the day is coming when people who have not put their trust in Him will find out what it's like to have God against them--it will not be pretty.

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3:4-6

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Romans 1:18-20

...but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:6

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45b

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" Matthew 13:27-30

When we are saved, that is the beginning--NOT of earning or keeping our salvation, but of our NEW life in God--of the death of our old sinful self with its desires to rebel against God and the new birth as a child of God who desires to please and serve Him. Unless we are born again, which is when His Spirit regenerates our dead-to-the-things-of-God spirit, at the moment we truly believe in our hearts and make Jesus as OUR Lord (not just "some lord," but we acknowledge that He has redeemed and purchased US by His precious blood when He paid for OUR sins on the cross), then we

cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the ONLY door into that Kingdom.

So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." John 10:7-11

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But whoever is united with the Lord is one with Him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:15-20

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:14-19

If we are saved, then we are to live for the glory of God (with the help of His Spirit within us) and if we are not saved, then we have

no ability whatsoever to please God or bring Him glory in any way. He gave us free will and it's His desire that ALL should be saved.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Philippians 2:12-16

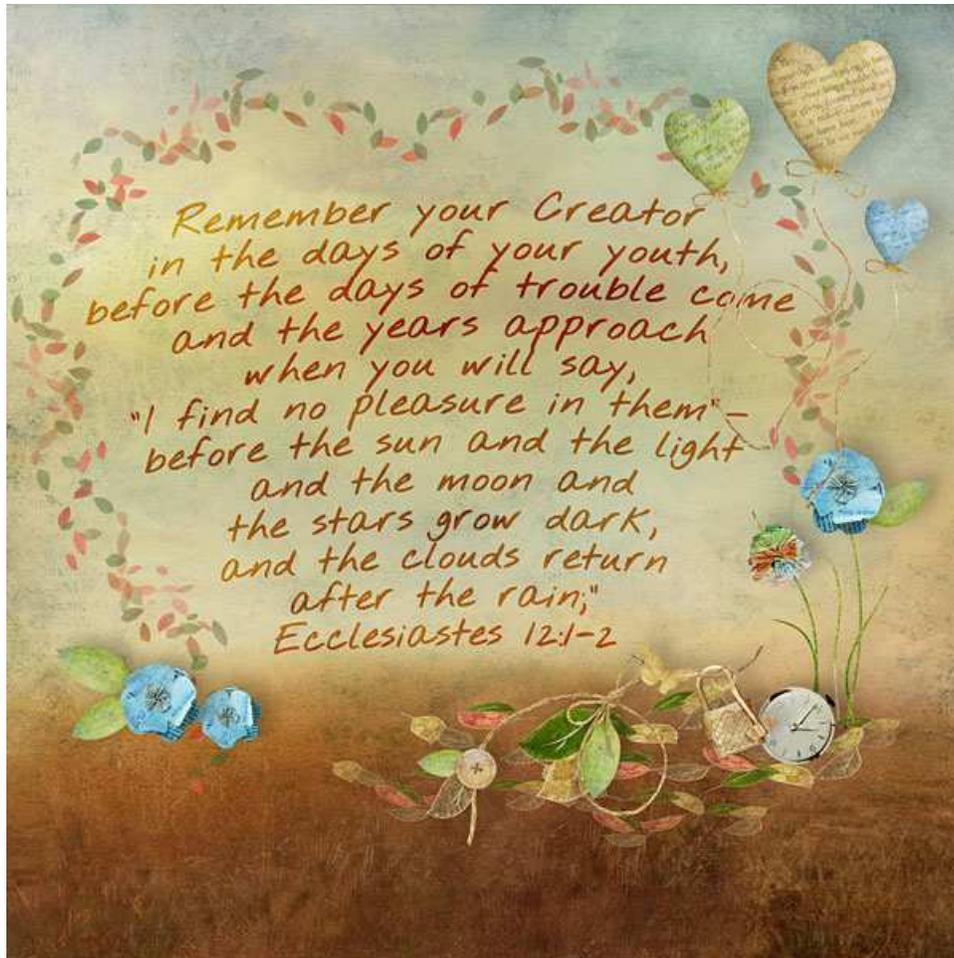
For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Romans 8:7

Today is a good day to be saved or tell someone else how to be saved--before Jesus returns or we have our own personal appointment with God.

For He says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

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