

When the apostle Paul wrote to Titus about the work of a pastor, he said, “Encourage the young men to be self-controlled” (Titus 2:6). In this booklet, I want to give some words of advice and encouragement to all young people which I hope will help and encourage them to live godly lives and to keep them out great mistakes and great sins. If you make great mistakes and fall into great sins when you are young, they could spoil your life both here on earth and in eternity.

There are four things that I want to do in this booklet.

- I. I will explain to you why young people need to be encouraged to live a godly life.
- II. I will show you some of the dangers that young people need to be warned against.
- III. I will give you some words of advice.
- IV. I will give you some special rules for life which I encourage you to follow.

I want to say some things about these four matters, and it is my prayer that these things will be of some help to you.

I. Why young people need to be encouraged to live a godly life.

Why is it that young people need to be given advice and encouragement? I will give you several reasons for this.

1. The first reason I want to give advice and encouragement to young people is because very few young people are saved.

When you look at the world, you notice that very few young people are serious with God. This is something we see everywhere: whether they are rich or poor; whether they are educated or not educated; whether they live in the city or in the village. I fear that wherever you look you find that generally very few young people are on the narrow path which leads to eternal life; very few young people are serious about the things of heaven; very few young people are taking up the cross and following Christ. I say this with great sorrow, but I truly believe this to be so. Young people, you are very many in this country, but are you in a healthy spiritual condition? It is sad to notice that wherever we look, we find the same thing.

When you talk to a faithful pastor of a church, he will tell you that young people are the ones who do not attend church on Sundays as regularly as older people. He will tell you that young people do not come to prayer meetings very often, and that young

people need to be rebuked and given warnings more than anyone else. This is what the faithful pastor will tell you.

When you talk to parents, you hear the same thing. Parents will tell you that it is the young people in the home who are easily led into sin by their friends, and that it is the young people in the home whom they have to take care of all the time, and that it is the young people in the home who are very difficult to control. This is what all parents tell us.

Talk to judges and the police and you will hear the same thing. They will tell you that it is usually the young people who go to bars and who fight in the streets and who steal. They will tell you that it is usually young people who are in jail.

When we talk to the rich people in the upper classes, again we find the same thing. They will tell you that in some families, their sons are wasting time, health and money in the things of this world. Another family will tell you that the children do not want to work, they just want to relax all day. Another family will tell you that their children are getting into bad company, that they are gambling and getting into debt. Even in those families that are rich, these things are there: they have many problems with their young people.

These are all facts and we cannot deny them. It is a terrible thing that every time I meet a young person, I am meeting someone who is probably an enemy of God; I am meeting someone who is probably on the wide road that leads to destruction; someone who is not ready to enter heaven! This is the first reason I am writing this booklet to encourage young people to live godly lives: it is because very few young people are saved.

2. The second reason why I want to encourage young people to get saved is that one day you will die and face judgement.

Young people forget that death and judgement are before them, just as much as they are before others. Young people, let me remind you of the teaching of the Bible, “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement” (Heb. 9:27). Today you may be strong and healthy, but the day of your death may be very near! I am a pastor and I have seen young people fall sick just like old people. I have buried young people just like I bury old people. Many, many people die in our country while they are still young, many die between the ages of 13 and 23. And yet you young people live as if you are never going to die!

Perhaps you are saying to yourself, “Tomorrow I will think about life after death and will make arrangements for it.” Remember the words of the Bible, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). Do not say, “Tomorrow I will sort out these things,” because you may not be alive tomorrow. Tomorrow is the devil’s day; today is God’s day. The devil is not worried when you say, “One day I will get saved, one day I will begin to live a godly life.” He knows that that one day will never come. Don’t follow the devil today and leave salvation until tomorrow, make today the day you get saved.

Remember that we do not all live as long as people like Isaac and Jacob in the Bible lived. Many children die before their fathers. Two of David’s sons, Amnon and Absalom died before he did; Job lost all ten of his children in one day. It may be that you will die before your father, and after you die there will be no point in talking about tomorrow.

Perhaps you are thinking that you will get saved when the time is more suitable. But remember that that suitable time may never come! In the book of Acts the Roman governor Felix waited for a more suitable time to get saved, and that time never came. The people of Athens said to Paul, “We want to hear you again on this subject,” but they never heard him again. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Get saved while you have the opportunity, don’t wait for a more convenient time because that time may never come. Do not leave the things that are eternal for another day, deal with them today.

You might think that getting saved is an easy thing and you can get saved anytime you want without any problems at all. But salvation is described in the Bible as a “great” thing (Heb. 2:3), and we all need this great work of God in us, whether we are young or old. We all need to be born again; we all need to be washed in the blood of Christ; we all need to be perfected by the work of the Holy Spirit. You need to make sure that you do not just put these things to one side and forget about them. You need to strive until you are sure that you are a child of God.

Young people, your time is short. Your life will soon be over: “Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall” (Isaiah 40:30). Your life may be taken from you in a very short time; you may have an accident or fall sick and then die very quickly. There is only a very short distance between you and death. This night your soul might be required of you. Like everyone else here on earth you are getting nearer and nearer to death, and one day you will be gone. You may not be sure what will happen in your life, but you can be sure that one day you will die and

face the judgement. Then you will stand before the the Lord Jesus who is the great judge. Remember that He has said, “Yes, I am coming soon” (Rev. 20:20).

Take to heart these words of the Bible: “Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgement” (Ecclesiastes 11:9). It amazes me that young people are so careless about salvation when they know that they are going to die and face the judgement. Death and judgement are before you and still you do not get saved. This is why Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Young people, I fear very much that God says about you, “They will not believe.” I fear that you will die soon and will face the judgement of God when you are not ready for it. This is why I am encouraging you in this booklet to get saved and live a godly life.

3. The third reason why I am encouraging you to get saved and live a godly life is that what you are now will shape what you will become.

The time of youth is the seed of what we will become when we are older. What we are like when we are young people will determine what we are like when we are grown up. Young people, do not think that when you are young you can live a life of sin and then when you are older you can serve God. If you are thinking like this then you are deceiving yourself. The person who lives like this is despising God. He is using his best years while he is still a young person to serve the devil and then he wants to serve God when he is old and weak. This is despising God, and God will not allow it.

Perhaps you are thinking to yourself that when you are older that is when you will repent and get saved. But this shows that you do not understand what the Bible teaches about salvation. Repentance and faith are the gifts of God. It often happens that a person has been offered the gift of salvation by God many times when he was young and he has refused because he loves the world. Then, when he is older, he wants the gift of salvation and asks God for it, but God will refuse to give it because he refused it when he was young. It is true that it is never too late to repent, but it is also true that very often a person who repents very late in life has not been given true repentance by God. The thief on the cross was saved just before his death so that we should remember that God can save a person even when he is about to die, but only one thief was saved like this so teach us that we should not be careless and leave the

matter of salvation until we are about to die. It is true that Christ “is able to save completely those who come to God through Him” (Heb. 7:25), but in the Bible God also says this: “Since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you” (Prov. 1:24-26).

Believe me you will not find it easy to turn to God just when you want to. The way of sin is downhill and a man cannot just stop when he wants to. The desire to live a holy life is not something that comes to us anytime we want it.

Why do I tell you all this? I say all this because of the power of habits. In my experience if a person’s heart is not changed when he is young, then it does not change very often when he is older. Our habits have long roots. If you allow a certain sin to enter your heart and live there then it will not leave when you ask it to go. We do not find it easy to change our habits and customs: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil” (Jer. 13:23). Habits are like a big stone that is rolling downhill. The further it rolls the harder it is to control it and stop it. Habits are like a tree that is growing. When it is very young a small boy can bend it and break it, but when it is old, a hundred men cannot uproot it. When a certain habit has been in our heart many years it becomes very strong and it becomes very difficult to remove it. A habit grows stronger as a child grows stronger and it gives birth to sin. Every time we sin our heart becomes harder and harder: we fear sin less and less and we fear God and the day of judgement less and less. Sin begins to take complete control of our hearts.

Young people, you may think that I am talking a lot about this matter. Remember I have been a pastor for many years. I have seen old men very near to death who have lived lives of sin for many, many years. These people are without any feeling of fear, their hearts are cold and hard. This is what sin has done to them, it has made their hearts like stone. Believe me, your heart will not remain in the condition it is in now. The habits that you have in your heart are changing your heart everyday. If your habits are sinful then your heart is becoming more and more sinful each day. You are going further and further away from God each day. Every year that you continue in your sin, the wall between you and heaven is becoming higher and wider; the gap between you and God is becoming more and more wide and more and more difficult to cross. Beware of the effects of sin upon your heart. Now is the accepted time. If you do not seek the Lord while you are still young, sin will get a grip on your heart and maybe you will never seek Him. This is why I am encouraging you to get saved while you are still young.

4. *My fourth reason for encouraging you to get saved while you are still young is that the devil makes a special point of destroying the souls of young people.*

The devil knows that you young people will make up the next generation and so he works really hard to make you his. I do not want you to be ignorant of the devices he uses. He uses very clever temptations to trap you. He uses the sweetest things to tempt you into sin. You young people are the ones he is targeting. May the Lord rebuke him and deliver you out of his hands.

Young people, beware of falling into the traps of the devil. He will try to throw dust into your eyes so that you do not see sin for what it is. He will make you think that sin is good and that good things are bad. He will present sin in such a way that you will fall in love with it. He will present salvation in such a way that you will despise it. He will tell you that sin is an enjoyable thing, but he will hide from you the pain of sin. He will tell you that to live the saved life is really difficult, but will hide from you the eternal rewards of salvation. He will promise great happiness if you serve him, just as he did with the Lord Jesus (Matt. 4:9). He will even help you to appear to be a Christian and to appear very religious, so that to others you appear to be a very fine Christian whereas in actual fact you are a servant of the devil. When you are young he will tell you it is too early to get saved, and when you are old he will tell you it is too late. Do not be deceived by the devil!

Young people, you do not understand fully the danger you are in from the devil. You are like blind people walking around where there are deep holes, you cannot see the dangers you are in.

Your enemy is *mighty*. He is called the prince of this world (Jn. 14:30). He opposed our Lord Jesus Christ throughout his ministry. He tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and so brought sin and death into the world. He tempted David, who was a man after God’s own heart, to sin so that the end of David’s life was full of sorrow. He tempted Peter, who was an apostle, to deny his Lord. The devil is a powerful enemy.

Your enemy is *restless*. He never sleeps. He is always going about here and there like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. You may be careless about your souls, but he is not. He wants to take control of you so that you can become his possession.

Your enemy is *cunning*. For six thousand years he has been studying the heart of man and he knows it well by now. He knows all the weaknesses of your heart; he

knows how foolish and how deceitful it is. And he has a large number of temptations in his store which will do great harm to your heart. Wherever you go, he will find you. Go to the city and you will find him there; go up country and you will find him there. Sit with the drunkards and he will be there to help you. Try to listen to preaching from God's word, and he will be there to distract you. Remember, your enemy is very cunning.

Young people, this enemy is working hard to destroy you, even though you may not know it. He is targeting you as his special prize. He knows that when you grow up, you will either be a blessing to others, or a curse to them and he is trying hard to get hold of you so that you will work for his kingdom. He knows that if he can get hold of you now, he will spoil the whole of your life.

5. In the fifth place, I advise young people to get saved while they are still young so that they can begin serving God now and not have many sorrows in their lives.

Sin gives birth to sorrow, the sins of youth bring much sorrow later in life. When an old man looks back over his life he has great sorrow over the foolish things he did and the time he wasted and the mistakes he made and the bad company he kept and the harm he did to his body and his soul, and the chances of happiness he threw away and the opportunities for helping others that he neglected. All these are things that bring much bitterness to the conscience when we are old.

Some old people will tell you that they lost their health when they were young. They will tell you of the sickness they have and the weaknesses of their body because of the sins they committed when they were young.

There are other old men who will tell you that they had great opportunities when they were young, but that they wasted them. They had the chance to get education when they were young, but they wasted the chance and now it is too late. Now when they are old they have time, but their minds are old and no longer able to learn.

Other old people will tell you that they made bad mistakes when they were young. Perhaps a person got married to the wrong man or the wrong woman and that spoilt his life forever. Or a person trained for a particular job and that work ruined his life. Now, late in life they bitterly regret that decision.

Young people, do not make mistakes in your youth that will trouble you later in life. The mistakes that you make in your youth are the ones that will give you most trouble. Seek the Lord early so that your conscience will not trouble you later in life.

Job said, "You write down bitter things against me and make me inherit the sins of my youth" (Job 13:26). This is why David prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways" (Ps. 25:7). If you speak to saved people today, they will say, "I wish I was young again! I wish I had lived a better life when I was young! I wish I had not started sinful habits when I was young!" Young people, I want to save you all this sorrow. Those who are unsaved find out too late that they are going to hell. Be wise in time. What you sow in your youth you will reap in later years. Don't give your best years to sin, because sin will bring you no comfort and happiness later in life. Sow to righteousness not to sin.

At the moment you may find it quite easy to sin, but remember that it is very difficult to flee sin when you want to. The effects of sin will remain in your life even after you have given up some of your sins. Young people, I want to help you avoid sorrow later in life, which is why I encourage you to get saved and live a godly life while you are young.

Part II, Particular dangers which young people face.

In the second place, I want to warn all young people about some particular dangers which they face.

1. One danger to young people is pride.

We as human beings all have souls that need to be saved. Whether a person is old or young, it does not matter, he has a race to run, a battle to fight, sin to defeat, a world to overcome and a devil to resist. And there are certain sins which trouble us at certain times. For young people, there are certain sins that trouble them and I want to try and warn young people about these sins.

Pride is the oldest sin in the world. Pride was there before the world was created. Satan and his angels fell by pride. They were not satisfied with the positions they had been given and so fell into pride and were judged.

Pride was the reason why Adam was thrown out of paradise. He was not happy with the position that God had given him, he tried to raise himself but instead he fell. This is how sin, sorrow and death entered the world, they came by pride.

Pride is in our hearts. We are born proud. Pride makes us satisfied in ourselves, it makes us think we are good enough as we are, it prevents us from taking advice, it

makes us refuse the gospel of Christ, it makes us follow our own way. And the place where we find pride the most is in the heart of a young person.

Young people are often proud and arrogant and will not take advice. Young people are often rude and impolite and they think that they should be respected and honoured. Young people very often will refuse to listen to an older person. They think they know everything and that they are full of wisdom. They often think that older people are stupid. They think that they do not need teaching and that they understand all things. When someone speaks to them they get angry, and they do not like to be controlled. They want to follow their own way. They are like the people Job spoke about: “Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!” (Job 12:2). This is all pride.

Rehoboam was a young man who was proud and rejected the advice of older men who had advised his father and listened instead to the young men of his own generation. He lived to reap the consequences of his foolishness. There are many like him.

The prodigal son in the parable was a proud young man. He wanted to have his share of his father’s property and to live by himself. He did not want to live under his father’s authority but wanted to go to the far country and be his own master. But he was like a little child who leaves his mother’s hand and tries to walk by himself. He soon found he was in trouble. After he had eaten with the pigs, he became wise. There are many like him.

Young people, I urge you sincerely, beware of pride. There are two things which are very rare in the world: one is a young man who is humble, and the other is an old man who is content. Young people, do not be proud of your own abilities, your own strength, your appearance and your cleverness. Do not be proud of yourself. We become proud because we do not know ourselves. The older you grow and the more you see, the less reason you will find for being proud. People are usually proud because they are ignorant and inexperienced. Once these things are removed, pride will go.

Remember that the Bible tells us that a humble person is excellent. We are warned, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought” (Rom. 12:3). We are told, “The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2). We are given this command, “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12). Also, we are told, “All of

you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another” (1 Pet. 5:5). Humility is something very few people have.

Think of the great example the Lord Jesus Christ leaves us in humility. He washed the feet of His disciples, and said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (Jn. 13:15). It is written, “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” (2 Cor. 8:9), and again, “He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:7-8). The person who is proud is more like the devil and Adam than like Christ.

The wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, speaks of himself as a “little child,” and as one who did not know how to carry out his duties (1 Kings 3:7-8). His brother Absalom, on the other hand, was not like this. Absalom thought he could do anything: “If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice” (2 Sam. 15:4). Solomon’s other brother, Adonijah was also not humble: “He put himself forward and said, ‘I will be king’” (1 Kings 1:5). Solomon was wise because he was humble. He wrote, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 26:12).

Young people, make sure that these Scriptures are in your heart. Do not be too confident of yourselves. Do not think that you are always right and others are always wrong. Do not follow your own opinion when you find that older people do not agree with you, and especially when your parents disagree with you. Older people have experience and therefore you need to respect them. In the book of Job, Elihu, who was a young man, waited until Job had finished speaking because others were older than himself (Job 32:4). Afterwards he said, “I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. I thought, ‘Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom’” (Job 32:6-7). The young person who is humble and quiet will please everyone. Do not be ashamed of being someone who is still learning and does not know everything. When the Lord Jesus was 12, he was found “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). The man who is wise is the one who is still learning; he knows that there are many things he does not know and so he is humble.

Young people, if you want to be wise and happy, then make sure that you are humble.

2. *Another danger to young people is the love of pleasure.*

When we are young, that is the time when our desires are very strong, and like children, our desires shout loudly for the things they want. Youth is the time when we have health and strength and death seems far away; to enjoy life seems everything. Youth is also the time when we don't have the worries of life. All these things help young people think only of pleasure. They live only for the pleasures of this world, they are the servants of pleasure.

Young people, I do not have the time to tell you of all the dangers that there are in seeking pleasure only, and of all the harm it will do you. You are at an age when you want things that will give you excitement all the time, you do not want to think deeply about anything, you just want fun and pleasure and excitement all the time. Why is it that I am warning you about these things? It is because at your time in life these things have great power in your life and they influence you very greatly. Be on your guard. Do not be like the people who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4).

Remember my advice: the pleasures of this world will murder your soul. If you keep pursuing the pleasures of this world then you will silence your conscience and harden your heart. As you grow up, your heart will become harder and harder. Think about what Peter says, "Abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). The things of this world destroy your soul's peace and break down its strength; they lead the soul into slavery.

Think about what Paul says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature" (Col. 3:5); "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24); "I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Cor. 9:27). When God created man, his body was a perfect home for his soul, but now the body is all corrupted and needs constant watching. It is a burden to the soul, not a help to it, it is a hindrance to the soul not an assistance to it.

Think again about the words of Paul, "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Rom. 13:14). A very famous Christian called Augustine was saved when he read these words. Young people, I wish you all too could get saved when you read words like these!

Remember also that the pleasures of this world will not bring you satisfaction because they are empty. They look very attractive but actually they are very

harmful. Many things look very attractive when they are actually empty, and food sometimes tastes really sweet although it is very bad for the body. The pleasures of this world may bring you pleasure for a short time, but it is not real pleasure.

Carry on seeking the pleasures of this world if that is what you want, you will find that your heart is never satisfied with them. There will always be a voice within you that says, "Give me more! Give me more!" There is in your heart an empty place that nothing but God can fill. Solomon found that the pleasures of this world are empty, and you too will find that. They look very attractive on the outside but they are full of ashes and corruption inside. Be wise and remember that earthly pleasures are poison. Even those things which are not against the word of God, use only in moderation. Any earthly pleasure will destroy if you give them it whole heart.

I want especially to speak to you young people about the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." Beware of adultery and fornication and of impurity of every kind. People do not speak about these things very openly. But when we read the Bible, we find that the prophets and the apostles spoke about these matters very openly. This is something we need to do: so many of our young people fall into this sin and are therefore like Reuben, Hophni, Phinehas and Amnon. It is for this reason I want to speak about this matter openly. There is no profit to anyone if we keep quiet about this matter. I believe we teachers of the Bible should speak clearly and openly about this matter because it is the young person's sin.

When we break the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery," it is a sin that the Bible says takes away the understanding (Hos. 4:11). This is the sin that leaves deeper scars on the soul than any other sin that a man can commit. It is a sin that kills thousands of people in every age and it has tempted many of God's great servants in the past. Lot, Samson and David are all proofs of this. It is a sin that many people take lightly, but this is a sin that when a person falls into it, the devil rejoices because he is the unclean spirit. God especially hates this sin and says that He will judge it (Heb. 13:4).

Young people, "flee sexual sin" (1 Cor. 6:18) if you love life. "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient" (Eph. 5:6). Flee from any occasion when you might fall into sexual sin. Flee the company of those who might lead you into it; flee the places where you might be tempted into it. Read what our Lord says about it in Matt. 5:28. Be like Job who said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1). Flee the place where people are talking about this sin. It is something that should not even be named. If you talk about it in a bad way you will be

corrupted by it. Flee from thinking about it. Resist such thoughts, put them to death, pray against them, make sure you never give in to such thoughts. The imagination is the place where this sin often starts. If you guard your thoughts then you will be safe against it.

3. Another danger to young people is that they do not think seriously about life and about salvation.

One of the reasons why thousands of people are eternally lost is that they do not think seriously about their souls. People do not consider, they do not look ahead, they do not look around them, they do not think about where they are going. And then at the end of their lives they wake up to find they have been judged eternally.

Young people, you are in great danger of this more than older people. You do not understand the dangers around you so you are careless in how you live your lives. You do not like to be serious and quiet and to think, so you make the wrong decisions and run into sorrow.

Young Esau wanted food desperately so he sold his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34). He never looked ahead and thought that one day he would want it again. Young Simeon and Levi decided to take revenge upon the Shechemites because of the way they treated their sister Dinah (Gen. chapter 34). They never considered how much trouble it would bring to their father Jacob and his house. Job was very afraid that his children would be careless in their behaviour. We read that after their children had finished their feasting, “he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts’” (Job 1:5).

Believe me, you cannot do well in this world if you do not think seriously about life; and you will certainly not do well in the matter of your soul if you do not think seriously. The devil will tell you, “Don’t think.” He knows that the person who is unsaved does not like to be examined very closely. The word of God says, “Think about your life; stop and think about what you are doing and where you are going, think and be wise.” There is a proverb from Spain which says, “Hurry comes from the devil.” Many people make mistakes about their soul because they do not think; then they suffer for it for years.

A person sometimes makes a bad mistake and then says, “I never thought about what I was doing.” In the same way, a young person runs into sin and then says, “I did not think about it – it did not look like sin.” How foolish! Sin will not come to you

saying, “I am sin.” It would not be dangerous if it did do this. Sin always seems good and pleasant and desirable at the time when we do it. Young people, be wise! Remember the words of Solomon: “Think about the paths for your feet and take only the ways that are firm” (Prov. 4:26).

Perhaps you will say to me, “Youth is not time when people need to be serious and think deeply about things.” But when we look at young people we find there is a lot of foolish talking and joking and going after fun. Young people live their lives like this and this is not wise. Solomon, who was a wise man said, “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure” (Eccl. 7:2-4). We need to be serious because everything around us is serious: God is serious in watching us; Christ is serious in interceding for us; The Holy Spirit is serious in striving with us; the truths of God are serious; our spiritual enemies are serious in trying to ruin us; those who died without salvation are serious in hell. Why then should we also not be serious?

Young people, learn to be thoughtful and serious. Learn to think about what you are doing and where you are going. Make time for thinking; examine your own heart and be still. Do not be lost eternally simply because you refused to be serious.

4. Another danger to young people is that they despise Christianity.

This is one of your great dangers. I notice that it is young people especially who do not respect Christianity. Not many young people attend church, not many young people take part in services, not many young people read the Bible and not many listen to preaching. You do not see many young people in prayer meetings and in meetings where the Bible is being taught. They think that they do not need these things; they think that these things are for women and old men but not for them. They seem to be ashamed of caring for their souls; they are almost ashamed of going to heaven! There were young men in Elisha’s day who mocked him and were punished (2 Kings 2:23-25). Young people, beware of this danger! Be serious about Christianity.

If you despise Christianity you will go away from God completely. The person who jokes about Christianity becomes a complete unbeliever. Young people, think carefully about the danger you are in if you despise the Christian religion. Remember the words of David, “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God” (Ps. 14:1). It is the fool who says this, even though he cannot prove it.

Remember that the Bible is the word of God, and it has been proved to be the word of God. Many people have tried to attack the Bible, but they have never succeeded: “The word of God is flawless” (Ps. 18:30). It has been tested in every way, and the more it has been tested, the more it has proved itself to be the word of God. What will you believe if you do not believe the Bible? The only alternative is to believe something that is foolish and a lie. The Bible is the word of God, do not despise it.

People will tell you that there are things in the Bible that are difficult to understand. But this is because it is the word of God. So what if some things in the Bible are difficult to understand? We all take medicines even though we do not understand what they are and how they work! Even though some things in the Bible are difficult to understand, what the Bible teaches about salvation is not difficult to understand. Remember, people do not reject the Bible because they find it difficult to understand. People understand the Bible well, they know that the Bible condemns their behaviour and speaks against their sins and brings them to judgement. They pretend that the Bible is not true because they do not like the truths that it teaches. They despise the Bible because their lives are sinful, they despise the truth of Christianity because they live sinful lives.

Young people, when did God ever fail to keep His promises? Never! What He has promised He has always done. He promised that He would send the flood, and He sent the flood. He promised that He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and He destroyed them. He promised that He would judge the sinful people of Jerusalem, and that is exactly what He did. God has never failed to fulfil His word. Take care so that you do not despise the word of God.

Never laugh at Christianity, do not joke about holy things, do not despise people who are serious about spiritual things. The time will come when you will realise that these people were right to be serious about the things of God; the time will come when your laughter will turn to sorrow.

5. Another danger to young people is the fear of other people's opinion.

The Bible says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare” (Prov. 29:25). It is terrible to see the power that fear of man has over people's minds, especially over the minds of young people. There are few young people who have their own opinions or who are able to think for themselves. They follow other people blindly: what others think is right, they too think is right, what others think is wrong, they too think is wrong. There are not many original thinkers in the world. Most men are like sheep, they follow a leader: whatever is the fashion of the day, they will follow it. They do not

like doing things contrary to what others are doing; the opinion of others becomes their religion.

When a young person wants to do something, he will often ask himself, “What will my friends say or think of me?” This often stops them from doing what they know they should do. They are afraid that others will laugh at them and mock them and despise them, so they don't do the good things they know they should do. People know that they should read the Bible everyday and pray every day, but they are afraid of other people's opinions so they don't do these things. “What would people say if they saw me reading the Bible and praying? What would my friends say if they saw me doing these things?” These are the questions they ask, and so out of fear of man, they do not do the things they ought to do.

King Saul sinned against God and then said to Samuel, “I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them” (1 Sam. 15:24). King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Jews” (Jer. 38:19), and so he refused to obey Jeremiah's advice. King Herod was afraid of what his guests would think of him, so he had John the Baptist killed. Pilate did not want to offend the Jews, so he ordered Jesus to be crucified. This is slavery!

Young people, I want you all to be free from this sort of slavery. I do not want you to fear man when your duty is clear. Believe me, it is important to be able to say, “No.” King Jehoshaphat was unable to say no to Ahab which is why he had many difficulties (1 Kings 22:4). Learn to say, “No!” Do not fear that you appear hard and unfriendly. “If sinners entice you, do not give in to them” (Prov. 1:10). Remember that to fear man is a foolish thing. If you refuse someone something he can only be your enemy for a short time, and he cannot do you a great deal of harm! “Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, that you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?” (Isaiah 51:12-13).

Remember also that if you follow the opinions of other men they will not thank you for it! They will not think that you are a good man. The people of the world always respect those who are bold for God. Do not be ashamed of being serious about Christianity; do not be ashamed of being a servant of God; and never be afraid of doing what is right.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). If you try to please God only, He will give you favour

with other people: “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7).

Young people, be courageous, do not pay attention to what the world says or thinks: you will not be with the world forever. Can man save you? No. Will man be your judge on the Day of Judgement? No. Can man clean your conscience from sin and give you a hope of heaven when you are dying? Can man resurrect your body? No! No! No! Man can do nothing of this sort. Then “Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool” (Isaiah 51:7-8).

These are the warnings I give you. Take them to heart and think seriously about them. I believe these warnings are greatly needed today.

III. Words of advice to young people.

In the third place, I want to give some advice to young people.

1. For one thing, get a clear understanding of how evil sin is.

Young people, if you knew what sin is and what sin has done, you would understand why I am giving you this advice. You do not see sin in its true colours. Your eyes are naturally blind to its guilt and danger, and so you do not understand why I am writing these things to you. Do not let the devil persuade you that sin is only a small matter!

Think for a moment what the Bible says about sin. It tells us that sin lives in the heart of every man and woman alive (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23). It tells us that sin makes our thoughts, words and actions unclean all the time (Gen. 6:5; Matt. 15:19). It tells us that sin makes us guilty and hateful in the sight of a holy God (Isaiah 64:6; Habakkuk 1:13). The Bible tells us that sin leaves us completely without hope of salvation if we look to ourselves (Ps. 143:2; Rom. 3:20). The Bible tells us that sin has brought shame and that in the end its wages are death (Rom. 4:21,23). Think carefully about all of this.

Think about how sin has changed the nature of man. Man is no longer what he was when God created him. When God created man, man was perfect (Eccl. 7:29), when he was created, he was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). And what is man now? He is fallen and ruined and corrupted. His heart is set on the things of this world and not on the things of God; his mind is darkened and unable to guide him, not knowing

good from evil. His will is tossed about to and fro by every desire, and chooses any path but the one God wants. This is why fallen man is described in the Bible as blind, deaf, sick, asleep and dead. This is how he is described by the Holy Spirit in the Bible. This is what sin has done to man!

Think, also, of what it has cost God to provide forgiveness for sinners. God’s own Son had to come into the world and be fully human. He had to pay the price for our redemption and deliver us from the curse of the law. He who was with the Father from the beginning and made all things, had to suffer for sin, the just for the unjust. He had to die as a common criminal before the way to heaven could be opened to us. He was despised and rejected by men, He was beaten, mocked and insulted, He was hanged on the cross of Calvary and cried out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” All this was done because of sin.

Think about what sin has done here on earth. Adam and Eve were thrown out of Eden because of sin; the flood came because of sin; Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of sin; Pharaoh and the Egyptian army were drowned because of sin; the tribes of Canaan were destroyed because of sin; and the twelve tribes of Israel were scattered because of sin. It is sin that did all this.

Think of the suffering and sorrow that sin has caused and is still causing. Pain disease and death; wars, quarrels and divisions; envy, jealousy and hatred; lying, fraud and cheating; violence, oppression and robbery; selfishness, unkindness and ingratitude – all these are the fruits of sin; sin is the parent of all these sins. It is sin that has spoiled the whole of God’s creation.

Young people think about these things and you will understand why I am speaking to you about sin. If you did think about these things, you would flee sin forever! Why play with poison? Why play with hell as if it is a light thing? Why have your deadliest enemy in your heart? Why live in such a way that you do not care if your sins are forgiven or not? Why live as if you don’t care if sin rules your life or not? Wake up and understand the danger of sin! Solomon says the one who mocks at sin is a fool (Prov. 14:9).

Listen to my request: pray that God will teach you the real evil of sin.

2. For another thing, seek to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the most important thing in Christianity. Until you come to know Christ, all my teaching and advice will be useless, and all your efforts will be in vain.

I want you to understand me clearly. I do not mean that you need to know just some few things here and there about Christ. I mean that you need to know His mercy, grace and power; I mean that you need to experience Him in your hearts. I want you to know Christ by faith; I want you to know “the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). I want you to know Christ as your peace and your strength, your life and your comfort, your Physician and your Shepherd, your Saviour and your God.

Why do I make such a point of this? Because all the fullness of God dwells in Christ (Col. 1:19); because in Him alone there is everything we need for our souls. Without Him we are poor and empty, we have no righteousness and peace, we have no strength and comfort, we have no courage and patience, we have no power to stand, no power to go on and no power to make progress in this evil world. It is in Christ alone that all these things are to be found: grace, peace, wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption. The more we depend upon Him, the stronger we are as Christians. It is only when we trust Him fully that we shall do great works. Only then are we armed for the battle of life, and shall overcome. Only then are we prepared for the journey of life, and shall make progress. To depend upon Christ, to receive help from Christ, to do all in the strength of Christ, to be ever looking to Christ – this is the true secret of spiritual success. Paul says, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13).

Young people, I set Jesus Christ before you this day as the treasury of your souls; and I invite you to begin by going to Him. Let this be your first step: go to Christ. Do you need a friend to guide you? He is the best friend, “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). Do you feel unworthy because of your sins? Do not fear; His blood cleanses us from all sin. He says, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). Do you feel weak and unable to follow Him? Do not fear, He will give you the power to become a child of God. He will give you the Holy Spirit to come and live in you. He will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. Are you troubled by some particular weakness? Do not fear. Do not fear, there is no enemy that Jesus cannot defeat, there is no sickness of the soul that He cannot heal. Do you have doubts and fears? Remove them from you. Jesus says, “Come to Me; whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”

He knows well the heart of a young person. He knows your trials and your temptations, your difficulties and your enemies. When He was here on earth, He was like you, a young person growing up in Nazareth. He knows by experience a young

person’s mind. He can be touched by your weaknesses because He Himself suffered and was tempted. If you turn away from a Saviour such as this you will have no excuse at all.

Hear the request I make of you today: if you love life, get to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. For another thing, never forget that nothing is as important as your soul.

Your soul is eternal, it will live forever. The world and everything in it will pass away; even though it looks very strong and very solid, this world will one day come to an end. “The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (2 Pet. 3:10). The works of great leaders, writers, painters and architects will all be destroyed: your soul will live longer than them. The angel from heaven will one day proclaim, “Time shall be no more” (Rev. 10:6), but that will not be true of your soul.

Try to understand that your soul is the one thing worth living for. Your soul is the one thing you should always consider first. Any place or any work that injures your soul is not good for you. Any friend or companion who does not consider your soul to be important should not be your close friend. The person who hurts you or your property or your character only does you temporary harm. But the person who does damage to your soul is your true enemy.

Think for a moment: why has God put you on this earth? It is not just to eat and drink and pursue the pleasures of this world. It is not just to wear nice clothes and follow your desires wherever they may lead. It is not just to work and sleep and laugh and talk and enjoy yourself and think of nothing but having a good time. No! You were created for something higher and greater than this. You were put here to get yourself ready for eternity. Your body was created to be the home of your soul, do not make the body more important than the soul, the soul is more important than the body.

Young people, God does not regard people as we regard people. He does not regard a man’s wealth or education or position. He does not look at people as we look at people. The poorest beggar who is saved is more important in His sight than the richest man who is unsaved. God does not look at riches, position, education, beauty or anything like that. The only thing God looks at is the condition of the soul. This is the one thing that is important to him above everything else.

Do not forget this. Remember at all times that your soul is important. When you wake up each morning, be determined that your soul should make spiritual progress; when you go to sleep at night, ask yourself if your soul has made good progress that day. Live in such a way that you care for your soul, and do not be ashamed of doing this. The day is coming when the only thing people will worry about is their soul, and the only question they will ask is, "Is my soul lost or saved?"

4. For another thing, remember it is possible to be a young person and yet to serve God.

The devil often deceives young people about this matter. He tells young people that they cannot be saved or they cannot be serious minded as Christians while they are still young. I have seen many young people carried away by this lie. People say things like this: "You can't expect young people to be serious Christians. Youth is not the time for seriousness, it is the time when we enjoy ourselves. There will be plenty of time later to serve God." This is how people in the world think. They think young people should be allowed to have fun all the time, and they think we should allow young people to live a life of sin, because they are still young. They think that it is impossible to be a serious Christian while you are still young.

Young people, let me ask you a simple question, "Do you find any of this in the Bible? Does the Bible support this sort of thinking? Does not the Bible speak about old people and young people without making any distinctions between them? Does the Bible not say that sin is sin, whether you are 15 or whether you are 50 when you commit it? Will it help you on the day of judgement to say, 'I was only a young boy when I did that sin'?" Use your common sense and give up these foolish excuses. You are responsible and accountable to God from the very moment that you know right and wrong.

I know that there are many difficulties in a young person's way when he wants to be serious with God and wants to serve Him. But whoever wants to follow God will always find that there are difficulties. The path to heaven is always narrow, whether we are young or old. Although there are difficulties remember that God will give you ability to overcome them. God is not a slave master like Pharaoh was in Egypt. He will not ask you to do impossible things like making bricks without straw. He will make sure that the path of duty is never impossible. If He asks a person to do something, He gives that person the power to be able to do it.

Although there are difficulties remember that many young people have overcome them in the past, and you too can overcome them. Moses was a young man like you but see what the Bible says about him: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).

Daniel was a young man when he began to serve God in Babylon. He was surrounded by temptations of every kind. He had just a few of God's people with him, many were against him. Yet Daniel's life was so blameless, that even his enemies could find no fault in him. The only thing they could do was to charge him with worshipping the one true living God (Dan. 6:5). And these two are not the only ones. The Bible tells us of a number of young people who were serious with God and served God while they were still young. Think about young Isaac, young Joseph, young Joshua, young Samuel, young David, young Solomon, young Abijah, young Obadiah, young Josiah and young Timothy. These were not angels, they were men. Their hearts were like your heart. They too had barriers in their way, and sins that they had to fight and difficulties in life. But although they were young, they still found it possible to serve God.

Young people, try to serve God. Resist the devil when he tells you it is impossible. Try and the Lord God will give you strength. He will give you the power that you need to serve Him. "Seek, and ye will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). The difficulties you face you will overcome if you are determined to serve God. When Satan says, "You cannot be a Christian while you are young," answer him, "Get behind me, Satan: by God's help I will try."

5. For another thing, make sure that the Bible is your guide and your adviser throughout your life.

The Bible is God's merciful gift to sinful man. The Bible tells man how he can attain eternal life; it tells us everything we need to know in order to make us peaceful, holy and happy. If a young man wants to know how to live when he is still young, then let him hear what David says: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word" (Ps. 119:9).

Young people, I encourage you: make a habit of reading the Bible, and do not break the habit. Your friends may laugh at you and your family may discourage you from doing this, but do not let them stop you reading the Bible daily. Make sure that you have a Bible, and that you make time to read it. Do not think that it is only a book for Sunday school children and old women. It is the book from which King David got wisdom and understanding; and it is the book which young Timothy knew from his childhood. Never be ashamed of reading it. Do not "despise the Word" (Prov. 13:13).

Read the Bible prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to give you understanding of it. Unless the Holy Spirit helps you, you will never understand the Bible. Read the Bible reverently, as the Word of God, not the word of man. Remember that what the Bible approves of is right, and what it condemns is wrong. Remember that anything which disagrees with the Bible is false. Remember the Bible is there to protect you from false teaching. Remember that anything in your life which is contrary to Scripture, is sinful and must be given up.

Different people do different things when they read the Bible. King Jehoiakim read it, and at once cut the writing to pieces, and burned it on the fire (Jer. 36:23). Why? Because his heart rebelled against it, and he did not want to obey it. King Josiah read it, and at once repented, and prayed to the Lord (2 Chron. 34:19). Why? Because his heart was tender and obedient. He was ready to do anything which Scripture showed him was his duty. Make sure that you are like Josiah and not like Jehoiakim.

Read the Bible regularly. This is the only way to become "mighty in the Scriptures." If you read the Bible in a hurry and read a few verses here and there it will not do you much good; you will never get to know it well and you will not be able to use it when you are being tempted. If you get to know the Bible well by reading it everyday you will soon discover its value and power. You will remember passages from the Bible when you are being tempted or when you are being discouraged. David wrote, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps. 119:11); and Solomon's wrote about the commands of God, "When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you" (Prov. 6:22). Young people, give the Bible the honour due to it every day you live. Make sure you read the Bible first thing each day.

6. For another thing, never be a close friend of any one who is not a friend of God.

By this I do not mean that you must have no dealings with anyone but saved people only. It is impossible to live like that, and it is not God's will that we should cut ourselves off from the world. But I advise you to be very careful in your choice of friends. Do not become a close friend to someone just because he is clever, or he is an attractive person or anything like that. Never be satisfied with the friendship of any one who will not be useful to your soul.

Believe me, this is a most important matter. A lot of harm can be done to your soul by ungodly friends and companions. Remember, the devil uses our friends and companions to ruin us. You may have been born in a good Christian family and have a good education and have a good sense of right and wrong. But if you have ungodly friends, all these things will be of no help to you at all. David's son Amnon raped his sister. When we read this story in the Bible, we find it begins with these words, "Now Amnon had a friend... a very shrewd man" (2 Sam. 13:3).

Remember that we as human beings automatically follow the example of others. We may learn many things, but it is the example of others that leads us in life. We usually follow the ways of those who are around us, and the more we like them, the more we follow their example. Our friends influence us and make us what we are. Remember also that we usually follow the sinful example of others far more quickly than the good example of others. People catch sickness from those around them, they do not catch good health! It is very easy for a young person to be led into sin by bad companions.

Young people, I ask you to take these things to heart. Before you let anyone become your close friend, ask yourself the question, "Will this friendship be useful to me spiritually?" Remember that the Bible says, "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Cor. 15:33). Have this verse in your hearts. Good friends can be a very great blessing. They can protect us from sin and help us in our Christian life. They can encourage us and help us greatly in our Christian walk. On the other hand, bad friends can do us a lot of harm. They are like a weight on our heads, constantly dragging us down. If you are friendly with a person who is not a Christian at all in any way, it is very likely you will become like him. This is what usually happens: the good go down to the bad, but the bad do not come up to the good.

I am speaking to you about this matter because it is a very important matter. When you get married, you will probably marry someone you has been a good friend of yours for some time. Remember that the person you marry will be very important in your life. A marriage will either make a man or spoil him. Your wife or your husband will either help you spiritually or bring you harm. He or she will either make you more zealous in the things of God, or make you more and more careless. He who finds a good wife finds a good thing. Be very careful who your friends are at the moment, because it is very likely that your husband or your wife will come from your circle of friends. If your circle of friends is a good one then you will find a good marriage partner, if the circle is an evil one then your marriage partner will probably hinder you in your spiritual life.

Perhaps you are asking, "What sort of friends should I choose?" Choose friends who will benefit your soul, friends whom you can really respect, friends whom you would like to have near you on your death-bed, friends who love the Bible, and are not afraid to speak to you about it, friends you will not be ashamed of on the Day of Judgement. Follow the example of David. He says, "I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts" (Ps. 119:63). Remember the words of Solomon: "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm" (Prov. 13:20).

IV. Special Rules for Young People.

In the last place, I will set down some special rules of behaviour which I strongly advise all young people to follow.

1. For one thing, resolve at once, by God's help, to leave every sin, no matter how small.

Look within, each one of you. Examine your own hearts. Do you see there any habit or custom which you know is wrong in the sight of God? If you do, delay not a moment in attacking it. Resolve at once to get rid of it. If you allow sin to remain in you it will darken the eyes of your mind and silence your conscience. Even though you may think the sin is just a little one, in actual fact it is a very dangerous sin. A

small leak can sink a great ship, and a small matchstick can start a great fire. In the same way a sin that you think is a very small one can ruin your immortal soul. Take my advice, do not allow any sin to remain in you. The nation of Israel was commanded to slay every Canaanite, both great and small. Act on the same principle, and show no mercy to sin.

Observe the person who today is a very wicked person. When he started life, he never intended to be so wicked. But he began by allowing some little sin to remain in his life. Soon, that little sin led to something greater, and that in time produced something greater still, until the person became very wicked. When Hazeel heard from Elisha of the horrible acts that he would one day do, he said with astonishment, "How could your servant, a mere dog, accomplish such a feat?" (2 Kings 8:13). But he allowed sin to take root in his heart, and in the end he did many wicked acts.

Young people, resist sin when it is beginning to take root in your heart. A sin may look very small and harmless, but resist it. Make no compromise with sin, let no sin remain quiet and undisturbed in your heart. The point of a needle is small, but when it has made a hole, it brings all the thread with it. Remember Paul's words, "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" (1 Cor. 5:6). There are many young people who have ruined their lives because they allowed small sins to remain in their lives. A person may begin with the habit of telling lies and being dishonest in small matters, but this will grow in him. Step by step he will go from bad to worse until he has begun to live a life of great sin and has almost lost his soul. He allowed a gap in the wall of his conscience, because it seemed a little one, but that gap grew larger every day, till finally the whole wall came down.

Remember this especially in matters of truth and honesty. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10). Whatever the world may say, there are no little sins. Big buildings are made up of little stones, and the first stone is as important as any other. All habits are formed by a number of little acts, and the first little act is of great consequence. The devil wants you to allow only a little sin to remain in your heart. If you allow it, you will soon be all his own.

There are two ways of coming down from the top of a tall building. One is to jump down, and the other is to come down step by step. Whichever way you use, you will come to the bottom. In the same way there are two ways of going to hell; one is to walk into it with your eyes open; the other is to go down by the steps of little sins. This is the way most people go into hell, by taking the steps of little sins. If you allow a few little sins into your heart, you will soon want a few more. And then after a while, your life will become worse and worse every year. This is how sin works in our hearts. First, when a sin comes to us, we are surprised and shocked; then it becomes pleasing; then easy; then enjoyable; then frequent. Then the sin has found a home in the heart. When this happens, the man refuses to repent; he becomes stubborn and refuses to leave his sin, and so he goes into hell.

Young people, if you want to avoid going to hell, remember this rule: resolve at once to break off every known sin.

2. *For another thing, make sure that you avoid anything that could lead you into sin.*

Not only must you make sure that you are not living a life of sin, you must also make sure that you avoid anything that could lead you into sin. This means that you need to be very careful how you spend your time, what books you read, which friends you visit, which people you spend your time with. Do not just say to yourself, "I am not committing a sin by visiting that person." Instead ask yourself, "If I go to visit such and such a place, is there a danger that I may fall into some sin?"

This is the great reason why you need to avoid being idle. A person who is idle is opening the door to evil thoughts, he is opening the door for the devil to come in and plant the seeds of sin in his heart. When David was idle in Jerusalem, he saw Bathsheba bathing, and this led him to commit adultery and murder.

Again, this is the great reason why you have to be very careful with worldly amusements. Some of these things may not appear to be sinful in and of themselves, but they make us worldly in our thinking. They fight against the life of faith, and they create in us a hunger for fun and enjoyment. The things of the world appeal to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life. The pleasures of this world make heaven less clear to us; they interfere with our prayer life and Bible reading and fellowship with God. The person who pursues the pleasures of this world is giving the devil a big advantage, he has a battle to fight, but he is giving help to his enemy! Such a person should not be surprised if he loses the war against sin.

Young people, do everything in your power to make sure that you do not do things that may lead you into sin. Your friends perhaps will say you are too serious minded and too hard and too narrow minded. Do not listen to them. Your soul is precious, do not play games with it. The person who wants to be safe must not come anywhere near danger otherwise he might be harmed.

Young people, what is the point in your praying "Lead us not into temptation" if you are going to rush into temptation? What is the point in praying "deliver us from evil" if you are going to rush into evil? Learn from the example of Joseph in the book of Genesis. He refused to sleep with his master's wife, and also he made sure he was not with her at all (Gen. 39:10). Remember the advice of Solomon: make sure that you refuse to walk in the paths of sin, and make sure that you do not go anywhere near that path (Prov. 4:15); make sure that you do not get drunk, and also make sure that you do not even look at wine (Prov. 23:31). Paul says, "Hate that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9), and "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). This means that we are to avoid evil, and we are to hate it; we are to avoid lusts and we are to flee from them. These are warnings that we need to hear very carefully. Young people are very careless how they spend their time and whom they befriend.

Young people, be wise before it is too late. Do not play with sin; flee from it and remain far from it. Keep clear of anything that may lead you into sin, and this will help you to keep clear of sin.

3. For another thing, always remember that God is watching everything you do.

God is watching everything you do! Just think of that! Wherever you are, whoever you are with, whether you are in the house or in the field, whether you are alone or with others, God is watching everything that you are doing! “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good” (Prov. 15:3). God is watching not just our actions, but He is also seeing what is in our hearts.

Try to remember this truth at all times. Remember that our God is an all-seeing God who does not sleep; He is a God who knows all your thoughts. You may leave God and go to a far country like the prodigal son, and you may think that there no one is watching what you are doing; but you are wrong: God is watching everything that you do. You can deceive your parents and your employers, and you can tell them lies. You can pretend to be something that you are not before some people and you can deceive them. But you cannot lie to God and you cannot deceive Him. God knows you through and through. He has heard the words you have spoken today, He knows the thoughts you are thinking this minute. He can see your most secret sins openly before Him, and one day they will come out before the whole world and bring you great shame.

How many of us forget this truth! How many things we do, which we would never do if we remembered that God is watching us! How many of our thoughts would we get rid of if we remembered that God can see them! We all think certain things in private and say certain words in private and do certain things in private which we would be ashamed of if they whole world knew about them. This is foolishness! There is an all-seeing Witness with us wherever we go. Even if you lock the door to your house and close all the windows and switch off all lights, it makes no difference: God is everywhere and you cannot shut Him out and you cannot stop Him from seeing what you are doing. “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account” (Heb. 4:13). Joseph in the book of Genesis understood this very clearly when his mistress tempted him. There was no one in the house to see them, no one who could speak against him; but Joseph knew that God was watching him, and so he said, “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

Young people, I ask you all to read Psalm 139. I advise you all to learn it by heart. Remember it when you are dealing with the people of this world and ask yourself at all times, “Do I remember that God is watching me?” Always remember that you are in the sight of God. This is what Abraham did: he walked before the Lord. This is what Enoch did: he walked with the Lord. This is what heaven will be: the eternal

presence of God. Do not do anything that God would not want to see, do not say anything that God would not want to hear, do not write anything that He would not like to read, do not go to any place where you would not like God to find you, do not read any book that you would be ashamed of before God, and do not spend your time in such a way that God would say, “What are you doing?”

4. For another thing, make sure that you attend all church meetings.

Be regular in going to the house of God whenever it is open for prayer and preaching. Be regular in keeping the Lord’s Day holy, and make sure that the Lord’s Day shall be used for the service of the Lord only. However, I do not want you to be confused in this matter. Do not think that simply going to church will make you a Christian. It will do no such thing. I do not want you to grow up being someone who is a Christian on the outside only. Do not think that simply attending church each week will make you a Christian and prepare you to meet God. If you think like this, I tell you plainly and openly that you are deceived. Any worship of God that does not come from the heart is unprofitable and vain. The true worshippers are those who will worship the Father “in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (John 4:23).

So going to church will not make you a Christian, and simply going to church will not save you. But that does not mean that you can be careless about attending church. It is true that attending church and listening to preaching from the Bible will not by itself save you; but it is also true that you will never receive any spiritual blessing from God if you do not attend church and listen to preaching from His word. It is possible for God to save a person and to prepare him for heaven without that person ever attending church or listening to teaching from the Bible, but as a general rule God does not do this. It is possible for God to teach His children using visions and dreams and miracles, but He chooses not to do so. God uses His word to save His people and to teach them and to prepare them for heaven, that is the way He has chosen to work. We must therefore make sure that we use the means that God uses to save His people and make them holy.

I am teaching you on this because the devil will tell you that it is not important for you to attend church. He will show you lots of people who attend church each week and yet live sinful lives. “Look,” he will say, “can you not see that those who attend church are no better than those who stay at home?” But do not let this move you. Just because some people get no profit from going to church does not mean that going to church is useless. There are many people who take medicine but never get better, in fact they die. But that does not mean that all medicine is useless! There are some people who get sick after eating certain foods. But that does not mean that we should all stop eating! If we go to church with a desire to worship God and hear from His word, then we will benefit from it, even if others do not.

Also, I am teaching you on this point because I feel that every young person should hear the preaching of Christ’s gospel regularly. I cannot tell you how important it is to listen to the preaching of God’s word. Perhaps as you listen to the teaching of

God's word, you might get saved. This is something that would make us rejoice! But even if you do not get saved, there is no doubt that the word of God has the power to stop people from living really bad lives of sin. There are thousands of people who have been preserved from living really sinful lives because they have been attending church, even though they are not saved. It has made them better members of society, though it has not yet made them true Christians. The preaching of God's word has a power in the lives of those who listen to it, even if they do not receive it into their hearts. The person who hears preaching against sin and preaching about holiness, the person who hears about Christ each week and about the kingdom of heaven and the life eternal, these people will not remain unaffected by such preaching. They may not get saved, but they will be better people in the world because of this preaching. This is why God says in the Bible, "My word shall not return to me empty (Isaiah 55:11).

Let me here name another point which is closely connected with this subject. Let nothing ever tempt you to become careless about how you use the Lord's Day. I press this on your attention. Make sure that the Lord's Day is used for the glory of God. There are many in our country today who are completely careless about how they use the Lord's Day, and this is especially true of young people. More and more, Sunday is used for travelling and visiting relatives and sport. Young people, be very careful about this matter. Whether you live in the town or upcountry, make sure that you do not abuse the Lord's Day. Do not let the behaviour of everyone around you influence you. Make it a rule of your life that God's day shall be given to God.

Once you stop caring for the Lord's Day, you will give up caring for your soul. You will begin by not honouring God's day, then you will soon not honour God's house, then you will soon cease to honour God's book, and before long you will cease to give any honour to God Himself. The person who starts by having no Lord's Day ends up with having no God.

Young people, you may have many companions who forget the honour of the Lord's Day; but resolve, by God's help, that you will always remember to keep it holy. Honour the Lord's Day by attending some place where the gospel is preached. Settle down under a faithful ministry, and once settled, let your place in church never be empty. Believe me, you will find a special blessing following you if you "call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land" (Isa. 58:13-14). And one thing is very certain, if you keep the Lord's Day holy and special then it shows that you really are saved and getting ready for heaven. The Lord's Day is preparation for us when we shall enter heaven and worship the Lord all the time. If you find the Lord's Day boring and you do not want to worship the Lord in it, then your heart needs to have a great change in it.

5. For another thing, resolve that wherever you are, you will pray.

Prayer is the life-breath of a man's soul. If we do not pray, then we are dead in the sight of God, even though we may call ourselves Christians. The person who is truly saved must have the feeling in his heart that he needs to cry out to God for mercy and peace. And prayer is the appointed way to obtain the spiritual help that we need in our lives. Prayer brings great blessings from God. If we have not, it is because we ask not.

Prayer is the thing where we all fail so badly. There seem to be very few people who pray. There are many who go down on their knees, and say a form perhaps, but few who pray; few who cry to God, few who call upon the Lord, few who seek as if they wanted to find, few who knock as if they hungered and thirsted, few who wrestle, few who strive with God earnestly for an answer, few who give Him no rest, few who continue in prayer, few who watch unto prayer, few who pray always without ceasing, and faint not. Yes: few pray! It is just one of the things we should all do, but very few actually practise it; a thing which is everybody's business, but in fact hardly anybody performs.

Young people, believe me, if your soul is to be saved, you must pray. God has no dumb children. If you are to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, you must pray. You may be in the company of those who never pray, you may have to sleep in the same room with someone who never asks anything of God, but still you must pray.

I know it can be difficult sometimes to have a time of prayer because you don't get the opportunity or find a good place to pray. But you need to remember that it is your duty to pray. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed on a mountain; Isaac prayed in the fields; Hezekiah turned his face to the wall as he lay upon his bed; Daniel prayed by the river-side; and the apostle Peter prayed on the house-top. You too must have a time everyday when you speak to God face to face, you must everyday have your time of prayer. You must pray. If you do not pray, then all teaching about living the Christian life is useless. Prayer is the most important thing in the Christian life. It is only by prayer that you will make progress in your Christian life. You must pray.

Young people, remember that the time you spend in prayer is time well spent. Make time for prayer, whatever your job may be. Think of David, king of Israel: what does he say? "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice" (Ps. 55:17). Think of Daniel. He had all the business of a kingdom on his hands; yet he prayed three times a day. That is why he was able to live a godly life in the wicked city of Babylon. Think of Solomon. He began his reign with prayer for help and assistance, and that is why he was such a wise and successful man. Think of Nehemiah. He could find time to pray to the God of heaven, even when standing in the presence of his master, Artaxerxes. Think of the example these godly men have left you, and go and do likewise. If this is the only thing you obey in this whole booklet then I would still be happy, because prayer is such an important thing.

V. Conclusion.

And now I come to a conclusion. I have said things that many perhaps will not like, and not receive; but I appeal to your consciences, Are they not true? Young people, you have a conscience. Even though we are corrupted and ruined by the fall, each of us has a conscience. The conscience is God's witness in our heart. It is a witness who condemns when we do wrong, and approves when we do right. To that witness I make my appeal this day, Are not the things that I have been saying true?

I appeal to you today young people, make sure that you are saved. Make sure that you go to God and seek Him until you have received salvation. Do not resist the word of God. The voice of your conscience will become weaker and weaker every year you continue to resist the word of God. The people of Athens said to Paul, "We want to hear you again on this subject," but they had heard him for the last time (Acts 17:32). Make haste, and do not delay. Linger and hesitate no more.

Think of the great joy you will give to parents, relations, and friends, if you take my advice and get saved. They have spent time and money to bring you up and to make you what you are. Surely they deserve some consideration from you. When young people get saved they bring great joy to all who are saved. But when young people remain unsaved and in their sins, they bring great sadness to all Christians. Think of the trouble that sons like Esau, and Hophni, and Phinehas, and Absalom caused their parents. Solomon's words are full of truth, "A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1). Think carefully about these things, and give God your heart!

Think of the good you may be able to do in the world if you get saved. Many of God's greatest servants got saved at an early age: Moses, Samuel, David and Daniel, all served God from their youth. God seems to delight in giving special honour to young servants. Think of the service you could give to God and to His kingdom if you get saved while you are still young. Workers are needed in the kingdom of God: there are churches that need a pastor, there are parts of the world where missionaries need to go, there are parts of this country where evangelists are needed, and there are Sunday Schools everywhere where teachers are needed.

Young people, you are wanted for God. There are many things you can do for the kingdom of God, if you are only willing to enter upon it. The harvest is great, and the labourers are few. Be zealous of good works. Come, come to the help of the Lord. Remember that God is not only good, but He is also doing good. We need to follow in His example, we need to be good and we need to do good to all (Ps. 119:68). The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38). We need to follow in His example and to be doing good in this world.

The Bible tells us that David served God's purpose in his own generation (Acts 13:36). We too need to follow in his example and serve God's purposes in our own generation (Acts 13:36). The person who is saved needs to be a servant of God, a

person who does good to others around him. When king Josiah died people mourned because he was such a good king who served his people. However, when the king Jehoram died no one was sorry! (2 Chron. 21:20). Young people, think about this. Which is better: to be idle and selfish and to live a life of sin and pride or to use your gifts and your time for the kingdom of God in serving others? Oh, who can doubt?

Young people, think about your responsibilities. Think of the privilege that you have received and the opportunity you have of doing good. Resolve this day to be useful. At once give your hearts to Christ. Young people, think of the happiness that will come to your own soul, if you serve God. If you are a servant of God from a young age, you will have happiness as you travel through life, and happiness in the end when your life ends and the journey is over. Believe me, there is a reward for the righteous even in this world. If you live a godly life you will have great blessings in this life as well as in the life to come. You will have the peaceful knowledge that God is your friend; you will have the satisfaction in knowing that you are complete in Christ, and that you have an inheritance that will not spoil and which will not be taken from you.

The path of the worldly man grows darker and darker every year that he lives; the path of the Christian is as a shining light, brighter and brighter to the very end. His sun is just rising when the sun of the worldly is setting for ever; his best things are all beginning to blossom and bloom for ever, when those of the worldly are all slipping out of his hands, and passing away. Young people, these things are true. Let me encourage you: be persuaded, take up the cross, follow Christ and give yourselves to God.

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