

# A Sermon for Young Men and Young Women

by Charles Spurgeon

“Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.”— Ezekiel 12:27

One would have thought that if the glorious Lord condescended to send his servants to speak to men of the way of salvation, all mankind would delight to hear the message!

We should naturally conclude that the people would immediately run together in eager crowds to catch every word, and would be obedient at once to the heavenly command.

But, alas! it has not been so.

Man's opposition to God is too deep, too stubborn for that.

The prophets of old were compelled to say, “Who hath believed our report?”

and the servants of God in later times found themselves face to face with a stiff-necked generation, who resisted the Holy Ghost.

People make many excuses for rejecting the message of God's love.

They display marvellous skill, not in seeking salvation, but in creating reasons for refusing it; they are skilful in avoiding grace, and in securing their own ruin.

They hold up first this shield and then the other, to ward off the gracious arrows of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are only meant to kill the deadly sins which lurk in their hearts.

The evil argument which is mentioned in the text has been used from Ezekiel's day right down to the present moment, and it has served Satan's turn in thousands of cases.

When people hear of the great atonement made upon the cross by the Lord Jesus, and are called to lay hold upon eternal life in him, some still say concerning the gospel, “The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of times that are far off.”

That is to say, they pretend that the matters whereof we speak are not of immediate importance, and may safely be postponed.

They imagine that religion is for the weakness of the dying and the elderly, but not for healthy men and women.

They meet our pressing invitation, “All things are now ready, come ye to the supper,” with the reply, “Religion is meant to prepare us for eternity, but we are still far from it, and are still in the hey-day of our being; there is plenty of time for those dreary preparations for death. Let us be merry while we may. There will be room for more serious considerations when we have enjoyed life a little, or have become established in business, or can retire to live upon our savings. You prophesy of things that are for many days to come, and of times that are far off.”

Very few young people may have said as much as this, but that is the secret thought of many; and with this they resist the admonition of the Holy Ghost, who says, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

They put off the day of conversion, as if it were a day of tempest and terror, and not, as it really is, a day most calm, most bright, the marriage of the soul with heaven.

Let every unconverted person remember that God knows what his excuse is for turning a deaf ear to the voice of a dying Saviour's love.

You may not have spoken it to yourself so as to put it into words; you might not even dare to do so, lest your conscience should be too much startled: but God knows it all.

He sees the hollowness, the folly, and the wickedness of your excuses.

He is not deceived by your vain words, but makes short work with your apologies for delay.

Remember the parables of our Lord, and note that when the man of one talent professed to think his master a hard man, he took him at his word, and out of his own mouth condemned him;

and in the case of the invited guests who pleaded their farms and their merchandise as excuses, no weight was attached to what they said, but the sentence went forth, "None of these men that are bidden shall taste of my supper."

God knows the foolishness of your plea for delay.

Very hard do you try to deceive yourself into an easy state of conscience concerning it, but in your inmost soul you are ashamed of your own falsehoods.

My purpose today is, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to deal with your consciences, and to convince you yet more thoroughly that delay is unjustifiable, for the gospel has present demands upon you, and you must not say, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off."

1. Firstly, while I grant that the message I bring to you does have to do with your future state, yet even so the day is not far off, neither is there so great a distance between now and then, that you can afford to wait.

Suppose that you are spared for 70 years.

Young people, suppose that God spares you in your sins till the snows of many winters shall whiten your head; suppose that your now youthful features shall escape the grave until wrinkles are upon your face; yet, still, how short will your life be!

You, perhaps, think seventy years a long time, but those who are seventy, in looking back, will tell you their life has been brief.

I, who am but forty, feel at this time that every year flies more swiftly than the last; and months and weeks seem to be like a blink of the eye.

The older one grows, the shorter one's life seems.

I do not wonder that Jacob said, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," for he spake as an extremely old man.

Man is shortlived compared with his surroundings, he comes into the world and goes out of it, as a meteor flashes through the skies which have remained the same for ages.

Look at an old oak tree, which has for five hundred years battled with the winds, and what an infant one seems when reclining beneath its shade!

Stand by some giant rock, which has confronted the tempests of the ages, and you feel like the insect of an hour.

There are persons here to-night of seventy years of age who look back to the days of their childhood as if they were but yesterday.

Ask them, and they will tell you that their life seems to have been little more than a wink of the eye; it has gone like a dream.

Therefore do not say, "These things are for a far-off time;" for even if we could guarantee to you the whole length of human existence, it is but a span.

But do not forget — that not one of us can promise himself, with anything like certainty, that he shall ever see 70 years, some of us may be gone long before that age.

Even more, we cannot guarantee that we will see even half that length of time.

You young men and women cannot be certain that you will reach middle life.

You cannot be certain that you will even see this year out, and hear the bells ring in a new year.

Yes, as close upon you as tomorrow is, do not boast yourselves of it, for it may never come.

It is clear, then, that the things which make for your peace are not matters for a far-off time, the frailty of life makes them necessities of this very hour.

You are not far from your grave, you are nearer to it than when this sermon began: some of you are far nearer than you think.

Can you look through a newspaper without meeting with the words "fatal accident," or "sudden death"?

Travelling has many dangers, and even to cross the street is perilous.

People die at home, and when working many are met by death.

How can you say, when we talk to you about preparing to die, that we are talking about things that are far off?

Dear souls, do not be so foolish.

I plead with you: let these warnings lead you to decision.

Far be it from me to cause you needless alarm, but is it needless?

I am sure I love you too well to distress you without cause, but isn't there cause enough?

Come now, I press you most affectionately, answer me and say, does not your own reason tell you that my anxiety for you is not misplaced?

Ought you not at once to lay to heart your Redeemer's call, and obey your Saviour's appeal?

The time is short, catch the moments as they fly and hasten to be blest.

Remember also, once again, that even if you knew that you should escape from accident and illness and sudden death, yet there is one grand event that we too often forget, which may suddenly put an end to your day of mercy.

Have you never heard that Jesus Christ of Nazareth who was crucified on Calvary, died on the cross, and was laid in the tomb?

Do you not know that he rose again the third day, and that after he had spent a little while with his disciples, he took them to the top of the Mount of Olives, and there before their eyes ascended into heaven, a cloud hiding him from their view?

Have you forgotten the words of the angels, who said, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"?

Jesus will certainly come a second time to judge the world.

Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man— no, not the angels of God.

He will come as a thief in the night to an ungodly world; they shall be eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, just as they were when Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and swept them all away.

In a moment— we cannot tell when, perhaps it may be before the next the words escape my lips— a sound far louder than any human voice will be heard above the clamours of worldly traffic, yes, even above the roaring of the sea.

That sound as of a trumpet will proclaim the day of the Son of Man.

"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him," will sound throughout the church; and to the world there will ring out, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which crucified him."

Jesus may come tonight.

If he were to do so, would you then tell me that I am talking of far-off things?

Did not Jesus say, "Behold, I come quickly!" and has not his church been saying, "Even so, come Lord Jesus"?

His tarrying may be long to us, but to God it will be brief.

We are to stand hourly watching and daily waiting for the coming of the Lord from heaven.

Oh, I pray you do not say that the Lord delayeth his coming, for that was the language of the wicked servant who was cut in pieces, and it is the mark of the mockers of the last days, that they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

Be not mockers, but listen to the word of God, "Behold, I come quickly." "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

2. But, secondly, I have to remind you that our message really deals with the present.

The blessings of the gospel have as much to do with this present life as with life beyond the grave.

For I am sent to plead with you, young men and women, and to tenderly remind you that you may be at this hour acting unjustly and unkindly towards your God.

He made you - do you serve Him?

He has kept you alive – are you obedient to Him?

He has sent the word of his gospel to you - have you received it?

He has sent his only begotten Son - have you despised Him?

Such conduct should come to an end.

Oh, may God's Holy Spirit help you to end it!

Would you wilfully wrong or neglect another?

I feel sure you would not.

Can you then be content to be unjust to God, cruel to the dear Lover of the souls of men, and opposed to the loving pleadings of the Holy Spirit?

How striking is Isaiah chapter 1: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider."

It is the wail of God himself over man's unkindness to his Maker!

Young man of honour, young man of integrity, does nothing speak to your conscience in this?

Can it be right to continue to wrong your God and grieve his matchless love?

Provoke him no more, I pray you.

Let your conscience lead you to feel that you have dealt ill with the Lord, and come ye to him for forgiveness and change of heart.

O Spirit of God, make this appeal to be felt by these beloved young people!

Again, my message has to do with the present, for I would lovingly remind you that you may be now in opposition with your best Friend — the Friend to whose love you owe everything.

You have grieved him, and are, without cause, his enemy; can you bear this thought?

I know a little child who had done something wrong, and her kind father talked to her, and at last, as a punishment, he said to her in a very sad voice, "I cannot kiss you to-night, for you have grieved me very much."

That broke her little heart.

Though a hand had not been laid upon her, she saw sadness in her dear father's face, and she could not endure it.

She pleaded and wept and pleaded again to be forgiven.

It was thought wise to withhold the kiss, and she was sent to bed, for she had done very wrong; but there was no sleep for those weeping eyes.

She loved her father, and she could not bear that he should be grieved.

Can you bear to live for ever at enmity with the loving Father?

"Would he forgive me?" you say.

What makes you ask the question?

Is it that you do not know how good he is?

Has he not pictured Himself as meeting His prodigal son and falling upon his neck and kissing him?

Before the child had reached the father, the father had reached the child.

The father was eager to forgive, and therefore, when the son was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and had compassion.

Say no longer that we are talking of things of a far-off time.

It is not so. I am speaking of that which I pray may be true to you tonight, that you may not remain enemies to God even another hour, but may now become his dear repenting children, and fly into your tender Father's arms.

I have to remind you, however, of much more than this, namely, that you are this night in danger.

On account of your treatment of God, and your remaining an enemy to him, he will surely visit you in justice and punish you for your transgressions.

He is a just God, and every sin committed is noted in his book; and there it stands recorded against his judgment day.

The danger you are in is that you may this moment appear before your Maker in an instant, to receive the just reward of your sins.

I come to tell you that there is immediate pardon for all the sins of those who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if you will believe in Jesus, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.

Know you not the story (you have heard it many a time) that the Lord Jesus took upon himself the sins of all who trust him, and suffered, in their stead, the penalty due to their sins?

He was our substitute, and as such he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

He laid down his life for us, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Will you refuse the salvation so costly purchased but so freely presented?

Will you not accept it here, and now?

Can you bear the burden of your sins?

Are you content to live for a single hour more in danger of eternal punishment?

Can you bear to be slipping down into the open jaws of hell as you now are?

Remember God's patience will not last for ever; long enough have you provoked him.

It is a wonder that you do not sink at once to destruction.

Your danger is immediate, the Lord grant that so also your rescue may be.

Do I hear you say, "But may forgiveness be had immediately?"

Is Jesus Christ a present Saviour?

We thought that we might perhaps find Him only after living a long life of seeking."

It is not so.

Free grace proclaims immediate salvation from sin and misery.

Whosoever looks to Jesus at this very moment shall have his sins forgiven.

At the instant he believes in the Lord Jesus, the sinner shall cease to be in danger of the fires of hell.

The moment a man turns his eye of faith to Jesus Christ he is saved from the wrath to come.

It is present salvation that we preach to you, and the present comfort of that present salvation, too.

Many other reasons make this weighty matter exceedingly urgent; and among them is this, that there is a disease in your heart, the disease of sin, and it needs immediate cure.

I do not hear people say, if they discover a disease in their body, that they will wait a while till the disease is more fully developed, and will then go to a doctor.

Most of us have sense enough to try to heal the disease at once.

Young person, you have a dreadful disease within your heart.

Do you not desire to be healed now?

Jesus can give you immediate healing if you believe in Him.

Will you hesitate to be made whole?

Is hideous sin so dear to you?

O that you would cry to be saved immediately, then will Jesus hear you.

His Spirit will descend upon you, and cleanse you, give you a new heart, and a right spirit, yes, and make you whole from this time henceforth and for ever; can you wish to have so great a blessing postponed?

Surely a sick man can never be cured too soon.

The gospel which we preach to you will also bring you present blessings. In addition to present pardon, it will give you present regeneration, present adoption, present sanctification, present access to God, present peace through believing, and present help in time of trouble, and it will make you even for this life doubly happy.

It will be wisdom for your way, strength for your conflict, and comfort for your sorrow.

Even if there were no life after death, yet I would still wish to live for and with Jesus, my beloved Lord.

To have the love of God in my heart, to have peace with God, to be able to look up to heaven with confidence, and talk to my heavenly Father in childlike trust is a present joy and comfort worth more than worlds.

Young men and women, in preaching to you the gospel, we are preaching that which is good for this life as well as for the life to come.

If you believe in Jesus you will be saved now, on the spot, and you will now enjoy the unchanging favour of God, so that you will go your way from now on not to live as others do, but as the chosen of God, beloved with special love, enriched with special blessings, to rejoice every day till you are taken up to live with Jesus.

Present salvation is the Lord's message to you, and therefore it is not true that the vision is for many days to come, and the prophecy for times that are far off.

I pray you cease delaying.

Again would I implore the Holy Spirit to lead you to immediate decision.

3. My third point is, that I will not deny, but I will rather delight in admitting, that the gospel has to do with the future. It is not only a revelation for far-off times, yet it is filled with glorious hopes and bright prospects concerning things to come.

The gospel of Jesus Christ has to do with the whole of a young persons life.

If you receive Jesus Christ you will not merely have him tonight, but that faith by which you receive him will work upon your whole life throughout time and eternity.

Dear young friends, if you are saved while yet you are young you will find religion to be a great preventive of sin.

What a blessing it is to be saved from a life of sin and self-indulgence.

To be saved out of life of sin is cause for great gratitude, but to have been kept out of it is better.

Prevention is better than cure, and grace gives both.

Thank God that you are still young, and pray earnestly that you may now receive grace to cleanse your way by taking heed thereto, according to his word.

Grace will also act as a preservative as well as a preventive.

The good thing which God will put in you will keep you.

I bless God I do not have to preach a temporary salvation to you.

That which impressed me about the gospel when I was a boy was its power to preserve from sinning.

I saw some of my school companions who had been highly commended for their character, and were a little older than myself, become sad criminals when they left home.

I used to hear sad stories of their evil actions and I thought to myself: "When I leave my father's house I shall be tempted, too, and I have the same heart that they have, indeed, I have not been even as good as they have been; the probabilities are, therefore, that I shall plunge into sin as they have done."

I felt horrified with that.

I could not bear that I should cause my mother to shed tears over a wicked son, or break my father's heart with my corruption.

The thought could not be endured, and when I heard that whosoever believed in the Lord Jesus Christ should be saved, I understood that he would be saved from sinning, and I laid hold upon Jesus to preserve me from sin, and he has done it.

I committed my character to Christ, and he has preserved me to this day, and I believe he will not let me go.

I recommend to you, young people, a character-insurance, in the form of believing in Jesus Christ.

I commend to you the blessed preserving power of faith in Christ Jesus, which will secure for you the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and abide in you, and sanctify you all your days.

I know I speak to some who shudder at the thought of wickedness.

Trained as you have been by Christian parents, and under the holiest influences, you would rather die than act as some who disgrace their father's name; I know you would.

But you must not trust your own hearts; you may yet become as bad as others or worse than they unless your natures are renewed, and only Jesus Christ can do that, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Whosoever believeth in him has passed from death unto life; he shall not live in sin, but he shall be preserved in holiness even to the end.

My dear young friends, if God will be pleased to change your hearts tonight, as I pray He may, you will be prepared for the future.

You have not fully entered into the battle of life yet.

You have your way to make, your careers to choose.

You have relationships to form.

Now, consider how well prepared you will be for life's work and service if you give your hearts to Jesus.

With the grace of God in your heart you will be a blessing in your chosen career.

You will have wisdom to choose for your life's companion someone who loves the Lord as you will do, with whom you may hope to spend happy and holy days.

You will have resources of joy and pleasure which will never fail; there will be a well of living water within you which will supply you with joy and comfort and consolation, even during trials and distress.

You will be prepared for whatever is to come.

You will be ready, young person, for any future, if your heart be right with God.

And do you know when I think of you, and of what the Lord may make of you, I feel an intense respect, as well as love, for you.

I hope none of us will be lacking in respect to old age, it is honourable, and it is to be esteemed and revered; but I feel often inclined to admire your youth.

Many years ago, there was a famous teacher, who when he entered his school-room, he always took off his hat to his boys, because as he said he did not know which of them might yet turn out to be a poet, a minister, a judge, or a prime minister.

When I look at young men and women, I feel much the same, for I do not know what they are to be.

I may be speaking tonight to some whom God will kindle into great lights to bless the sons of men for many a day, and afterwards to shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But you cannot shine if you are not lighted.

You cannot bless God and bless the sons of men unless God first blesses you.

Unregenerate, you are useless.

Born again, you will be born for usefulness, but while you are unconverted your usefulness is being lost.

I will not suggest that I expect every one here to become famous.

It is not even desirable; but I do know this, that everyone whose heart shall be given to Jesus, will be so useful and so necessary to the Church and to the world, that this world without them would lack a helper, and heaven's company would be incomplete unless they joined its ranks.

Oh, the value of a redeemed soul!

The importance of a young life!

I wish I could take the hand of every young person here, as he or she shall leave, and say, "By the preciousness of your life, by the important uses to which you may be put, by the good that you may do, and by the glory you may bring to God, do not think of pardon and grace as things of the future; but now, even now, lay hold of them, and they will become to you the great power by which you shall benefit your generation and go down to the grave with honour."

I pray that from generation to generation there may be those in our churches of whom it will be said they are sons and daughters of the faithful who will turn not their back on Christ, and so shall the Lord be praised.

Let me remind you, dear young friends, that if your hearts be given to Christ you need not tremble about the end of life.

You may look forward to it with hope.

It will come.

Thank God, it will come!

To die in the Lord is to be made like to our glorious Lord.

You need not be afraid to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Young people, whether you die in youth or old age, if you are resting in Jesus you shall sit upon the banks of Jordan singing.

The judgment will come, but you will not tremble at it.

On the right hand shall you stand, for who can condemn those for whom Christ has died?

The earth will be burned, the elements shall melt with fervent heat; but you will not tremble, for you shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall you be for ever with the Lord.

Hell shall swallow up the wicked, they shall go down alive into the pit; but you shall not tremble for that, for you are redeemed by the precious blood.

If you had to go through hell to reach this glory, it would be worth the cost!

But you have not to do any such thing; you have only to believe in Jesus, and even faith is the Lord's own gracious gift.

“Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.”

This is the gospel.

Look! Look! Look!

It is but a look.

Look ye ends of the earth, that are farthest gone in sin, if such be here!

You who are plunged deep in iniquity look!

It is Jesus on the cross you are invited to look at— Jesus at the right hand of God, the crucified Son of Man exalted at the right hand of the Father.

Look unto him, and be ye saved, for he is God, and beside him there is none else.

God grant to you to look to Jesus, even now, for his name's sake. Amen.