

Remembering the Past

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Mike Miller

Straight Paths Bible Church

2 Timothy 1:1-6 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Lam 3:21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

- I. God gave to man a memory.
 - A. It is unique to man – the animals do not have a memory of the kind that man has.
 - B. It is a work in progress.
 1. It is constantly being added to.
 - a) By day, by month, by year.
 - b) By associations, jobs, schools, churches, places we live.
 2. It is something we constantly draw upon.
 - a) For entertainment – reminiscing.
 - b) For guidance in some present circumstance or decision.
 - C. It is a big part of our wisdom and understanding.
 1. This is because it is a cumulative thing, and the more knowledge and experience we bank, the more we are able to understand.
 2. If our memory were flushed every time we slept we would be completely stupid creatures.
 - a) We would never progress in anything, but would live like the animals.
- II. Our memory is the record of our life.
 - A. But because people change through the years we tend to modify and distort our memories.
 1. For example, those in the church who drift into worldly thinking and lifestyles turn their memories of church and the people there into bad memories and excuses for their ungodly ways.
 2. Our imagination many times adds or takes away from what we remember about certain things.
 3. It is good to listen to recordings and music, and to look at pictures, and listen to the memories of others who were there, that force us to be honest about what we remember.
 4. There is also a tendency among us to make everything bad that has any association with something, or someone who left us with a bad memory.

5. So we need to keep a check on our memories and keep them in the truth as they really were and not fantasies of our own making.
 6. They are the record of our life and if we are not careful with them we become deceived about who we are now and how we got here.
- B. We remember our sins.
1. This is one thing we remember very clearly – we do NOT forget.
 2. But if we have found forgiveness it is harmful for us to dwell on the sins of the past.
 3. We should never forget them, but we should not call them to remembrance to think upon them and let them fill our mind again.
- C. We remember our afflictions.
1. The hard times in our life, and our problems with people and with things.

[Lam 3:19-20 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.](#)

2. Just as the Scripture says, remembering our afflictions should not make us bitter, but should humble our soul.

III. Our memory has the power to have great control of our life

- A. It can be our minister or our tormenter.
- B. It can cheer our heart and encourage us about the future, or it can drag us into the sea of despond and make us sad, full of regrets and bitter.
- C. It can plague us and make us miserable, cynical, and fearful of everything, or it can make us happy, optimistic, and confident.
- D. It can make us ashamed or it can make us thankful.

IV. God's instruction to us is to manage our memory the right way.

- A. As we go through life we need to be careful about the memories we make.
 1. So it is very clear that we can do a great deal now to make provision for a happy old age by deliberately choosing to make good memories.
 2. By being careful with the words we speak, the things we do to help others, and by being in the places where we can be a blessing to someone else.
- B. We need to realize that one day our life will be diminished to very little more than memories.
 1. The older we get the more we will spend our time going through our memories.
 2. One day they will be about all that we have left.
- C. God did not give us this great ability to remember to be a burden to us, but to be a blessing.
- D. No matter how much we try we will all end up with some bad memories, along with the good.
 1. Because memories are not made of only what we do and say to others, but what others do and say to us.
 2. It is impossible to live in a sinful world and not be hurt and afflicted by others – because that is what sin is.
 3. But we should do with the bad memories what we do with the stuff that goes bad in our refrigerator – throw it out and get rid of it.
- E. We should purposely call to remembrance things that will encourage us in the way of God, and also be an encouragement and a help to others.
 1. It pays to remember; the benefits are many and wonderful.

2. That is another wonderful thing about the way God designed our memory to work – we naturally tend to remember the good and forget the bad.
3. It works like other sinful habits and vices; we have to keep indulging in them until we begin to develop an unnatural desire for the stench and revolting flavor.
4. God tells us precisely the kinds of things we should think on and when we are calling to remembrance things from the past this should be our guide.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

5. We do not completely forget the bad, but somehow it loses its bitterness, if we are in a right relationship with God, because we simply do not re-collect them so we can feel that bitterness again.
 6. For the person who is always dredging up their bitter past their memory exaggerates and dwells on the bad until it becomes a fantasy of lies that never even really happened.
- F. We should purposely think on the blessings and deliverance that God has given us in the past – and not plague ourselves with our failures and afflictions.
- G. We should look ahead to the future with faith, hope, and love, but it is not right to say we should forget the past because we need both perspectives in order to navigate through life and make straight the way of the Lord for others.
1. We just need to make sure that we do not have a distorted or corrupted view of the past that throws our compass off for the future.
- H. We need to be careful and diligent to prepare the book of memories in our mind to be our comfort in our old age, and in eternity.
1. Sweet experiences leave us sweet memories.
 2. Sweet fellowship leaves us sweet memories.
 3. Sweet singing leave us sweet memories.
- I. Down the road, as our journey nears its end we will find that our sweet memories of the love of God’s people, and our dear ones is the greatest treasure we have gathered in this life.
- J. So let’s work at it and not neglect this important preparation for our future, which also yields great blessings today all around.

Proverbs 10:7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

1. This applies two ways: What we remember about our past is blessed, and what people remember about us is blessed, also.

Psalms 145:7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

2. The most blessed memories we have are those of God’s great mercy and love and kindness toward us in spite of our ignorance, carelessness, and foolishness.