

Sermon Outline for Sunday, January 19, 2014

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. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. – 2Tim 1:6-14

The Lord, beloved, hath given us the spirit of a sound mind. The word sound, here, means: in good condition, not damaged, injured or diseased. Competent, reliable. Able to reason, sense or judge well. And yet, this speaks to a capacity – one that we must exercise – as we know that the mysterious interplay between our minds and our hearts can easily lead us astray.

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? – Jer. 17:9

Deceitful above all things – above our fallible, internal ability to detect our own mischief. That's one good reason for our ministering to one another. Desperately wicked. What a turn of a phrase. Think on it. And then the rhetorical question – And who can know it? Certainly no one can know the

depths of his own depravity – only in the abstract and through honest introspection upon our beds (that is, in that quietest and clearest of moments, when we are alone in our thoughts and only God presents Himself to our consciences – with no one else around to convince of a thing or to hide a thing from), do we approach it. But God knows it. He fashioned it.

So we have this sound mind and this deceitful heart. A doozy of a combo. So what do we do? We can't deny the existence of either. And how fertile a field is the notion of a desperately wicked heart to plow, other than living in stark recognition of it, and therefore having our depravity be a constant humbler? But the Lord hath said unto us that He hath given us the spirit of a sound mind. And so, by the exercise of that excellent capacity can we develop its utility in helping us both individually, and collectively as a means of more fruitful ministering to each other's needs, both temporal, but most specifically, the spiritual needs which we all have and will have.

Countless sermons could be, and no doubt have been, preached on the subject of the proper mental operations of God's people: the concepts of *'judging righteously,' 'rightly dividing the word of truth,' 'reasoning together,'* and *'comparing spiritual things with spiritual'* all come to mind. As a vital prerequisite to those operations, though, beloved, I would like to draw our attention for a brief moment to the vital, foundational mental operations found throughout the scripture of 'remembering' and 'forgetting.' These concepts bear well more spiritual weight than simply the notions of 'remembering' as committing a thing to memory, as we might teach our children to 'memorize' the books of the Bible in order – though such rudimentary exercises are crucial to the forming of good habits, or conversation. Or of 'forgetting,' by no longer being able to draw forth into mind an idea that seemed readily accessible previously. There's obviously more to it than that. And even tackling those twin concepts is too big of a job for your servant at this present hour, as the scripture is rife with the notion of remembering, calling into remembrance and memorializing. It's too big a task for the window – it's more of a championship series than it is a single at-bat. I will, briefly, speak to the concept of a very specific remembrance later this morning. But what I propose for now is the simpler, focused notion of getting a handle on the 'dual' role of the concept

of 'forgetting' in the scripture, that it may ultimately help us in the proper exercise of our God-given capacity of the spirit of a sound mind.

In the great majority of cases where the concepts of 'forgetting' or 'having forgotten' appear in scripture, it is a negative, or undesirable attribute: Consider the following examples in scripture:

Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. - De 4:23

Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: - De 8:11

Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. - De 32:18

The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God. - Ps 9:17

That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: - Ps 78:7

Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. - Pr 4:5

Can a maid forget her ornaments, *or* a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. - Jer 2:32

Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from* the ancient paths, to walk in paths, *in* a way not cast up; - Jer 18:15

Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. - Jer 23:27

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. - Ho 4:6

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: - Heb 12:5

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. - Heb 13:16

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. - 2Pe 1:9

It each of these instances, and in many other places in scripture not referenced here, the idea of 'forgetting' is a bad thing, or a lacking on the part of the forgetter. In some instances it seems mindless; but in others the 'forgetting' seems more purposeful, as in a proactive, or willing forgetfulness:

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; - Ro 1:28

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: - 2Pe 3:5

In any event, there is penalty, or shame, or derision, or the great indignation of God Almighty toward both the forgetters and those whose duty it was to keep people from forgetting certain ideas about God, and thereby to keep one's life and mind focused on obedience to God as the driver of moral life – in short, to:

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. – Eccl. 12:13

While the notion of 'forgetting' is oft presented in scripture as an undesirable state, or a shirking of duty to our King, there is another sense in which the notion of a certain type of 'forgetting' should be the laser-focused aim of His saints, as removing the impediments to reaching forth for the prize of our calling that otherwise bog our spirit in absolute moral quicksand. The apostle Paul, addressing the church at Phillipi in its spiritual infancy:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* – Phill. 3:13-14

Not calling his salvation into question, yet not having attained the end of his calling, Paul strives at making further progress – and that 'reaching forth' signifies, in the Greek, a literal stretching out to the uttermost, with all one's might, like every muscle and sinew of a runner might flex and exert as he lunges toward the finish line of a race – think Olympic photo-finishes. Pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Heaven. His crown. His new body, fashioned like unto Christ's glorified body. All tears in the bottle. Never again a nanosecond of sorrow. In the presence of God – beheld as a friend and coregent by our Christ – our Saviour – our Redeemer. Safely in the eternal presence and poised for heartfelt praise of, inquiring of, and beholding the beauty of, our Maker.

But wait, there is something tugging at us, as though another runner in the pack is reaching forth from behind us, pulling us back, impeding our progress, and perhaps even sticking a leg into our stride to trip us on the track. Or perhaps by impulse, we turn, if only to survey that part of the course we've already run, or to see how far we've run, relative to the remainder of the course that we think we see in front of us. Or we remember a point back in the race where another runner 'cut us off' at a

turn, and become unfocused on what is ahead of us at that vain musing. Any of which acts as a direct impediment, or stoppage, in our ability to 'press toward the mark for the prize.'

Beloved, we have a proactive duty, a constant mental exercise, to 'forget those things which are behind,' as a prerequisite to even 'reach forth unto those things which are before.' And Paul was so adamant about this type of 'forgetting,' that he proposes it as the 'one thing' he apprehends, or 'gets,' or does, as a way to see clear and be unfettered to 'reach forth unto those things which are before, and...pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

In an early sermon titled 'A Call to Forget,' Arthur Pink preached on Phillipians 3:13-14 – *"The year 1915 is ended, 1916 just dawned...our faces are set to the unknown future, to the ultimate goal. We are running and as we are running we are to forget. What? Four things – our blessings, sorrows, disagreements, and sins of the past."*

I had to take more than a minute with the first one, beloved – as our blessings, including our deliverances, all from God, ought to be a constant leaping off place of our thanksgiving, gratitude and praise of our God. Calvin has a pretty good thing to say here: *Should any one remark, by way of objection, that the remembrance of our past life is of use for stirring us up, both because the favors that have been already conferred upon us give us encouragement to entertain hope, and because we are admonished by our sins to amend our course of life, I answer, that thoughts of this nature do not turn away our view from what is before us to what is behind, but rather help our vision, so that we discern more distinctly the goal. Paul, however, condemns here such looking back, as either destroys or impairs alacrity. Thus, for example, should any one persuade himself that he has made sufficiently great progress, reckoning that he has done enough, he will become indolent, and feel inclined to deliver up the lamp {2} to others; or, if any one looks back with a feeling of regret for the situation that he has abandoned, he cannot apply the whole bent of his mind to what he is engaged in. Such was the nature of the thoughts from which Paul's mind required to be turned away, if he would in good earnest follow out Christ's calling...when he says that he does this one thing, and forgets all things that are behind, he...excludes everything fitted to distract.*

And Poole states of forgetting 'blessings:' *like a true spiritual racer, not minding what he had received by grace from him who had took hold of him, or how much he had run of his Christian race, reckoning it was much short of the whole.*

And Gill adds: *(‘forgetting’) rather his labours and works of righteousness since conversion.*

The point here, is that while there is a sinful forgetting of the blessings of God (alluded to in our previous taking notice of some verses tied, negatively, to 'forgetting,' there is also a dwelling on our past blessings and deliverances that may hinder our forward motion or vision. There is a point at which our dwelling upon our past blessings and deliverances, or how much preaching we've done in this world, might cause us to slacken our pace, or think that we've already done enough, or that we've already subdued kingdoms and it's all downhill from here. Or since we've been through so many blessed experiences, that now 'we've got this.' To the contrary, as experienced as we are, we still must come to Christ as little, helpless, dependent children – trusting fully in God and leaning not upon our own understanding.

As for forgetting our sorrows, this is easier to see. Our hearts and minds being brought to seeing the Lord in our afflictions, both physical and spiritual, our persecutions and testings, is itself the beginning of 'forgetting our sorrows.' The remembrance of our sorrows is the Lord's glory;

Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they not in thy book?* - Ps 56:8

The Lord, putting our tears into His bottle, is part of the glory of the Lord in delivering His people from those sorrows – and thereby taking the sorrow away. In the course of this race which we reach forth – eternally.

Pink suggests that one of those things that we should effort, along with Paul, to forget, is our disagreements. That, without forgetting them (not that they happened, that would call for us to be robotic – but that we are not mindful of them – because we will undoubtedly also carry forth some

notions of that person with whom we had the disagreement that runs counter to true Christian charity, or of our commanded outlook of others as more worthy of God's mercy and grace than we, or of the notion preached most forcefully by Christ at Matthew 25, that the way we treat God's people is the way we treat God. A word about disagreements. It is impossible for two of God's people to be at odds about a spiritual matter and both of them be right. In every instance, at least one of them has some wrong thinking going on – perhaps both of them, but at least one of them. The mind of Christ is not dual, it is singular, and one mind and one accord is just that. So, disagreements of that nature are, by their nature, a manifestation of the flesh to either party who, by their flawed thinking, furthers the disagreement. And from there, we can certainly see the necessity upon our minds and hearts of forgetting them. Forgetting them. Putting them to bed. Not merely the act of not bringing it up in conversation, but the internal striving against sin which is to not let the residue of that disagreement hinder my right-thinking about you as a beloved brother or sister, who is the apple of my God's eye.

And finally, Pink suggests that we should forget our sins of the past. Both internally, as in me forgetting my sins, and externally, as me forgetting your sins, and vice versa. Not to forget that they happened, which again would call for a robotic quality that few of us might possess, but to forget the import of that sin as the fruit of our doings. One can become overwrought by their past sins, and have such a doleful mindscape cloud one's judgment of the matter –

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. - 2Pe 1:9

This is obviously speaking exclusively to God's elect, as there is no reprobate man who was purged from his old sins. The notion here, is that forgetting that we were purged from our old sins is bad, and remembering that we were purged of our old sins is not only the antidote for our doleful frame of mind, but it is the fruit of giving all diligence to see tokens of and effort toward the surety of our election, and enables us to see 'afar off;' that being the end of our faith, which is salvation in that great and terrible day, and eternal life. If the Lord God will not behold my iniquity, and by

the blood of the Lamb all my sins, past, present and future are forgiven, then what of your sins or mine should I remember?

Pink amplifies his point of the objects of 'forgetting,' with the following reasoning:

"Why are we to forget?"

- 1. Because the past is with God and you cannot undo it.*
- 2. Because the best is still to be: because God has higher things in store for us than we have yet seen*
- 3. Because everything of value in the past is included in the present, hence we ought to forget the past*
- 4. Because not to forget (those things) means a slackening of pace.*

Then,

"How are we to forget?"

- 1. By keeping the goal in view (being able to see afar off).*
- 2. By strenuous action in the present:*

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. – Jude 1:3

And finally, Pink preaches, by way of application of what has been taught:

"Here then is my (God's) message to you for the New Year. Perhaps last year you slacked in running – what hindered you? – a blessing, a sorrow, a disagreement, a sin? Forget it then, and, setting your face toward God begin a new year of consecration, of effort, of growth."

I love you all. Amen

Addendum to Sermon – The Lord’s Supper

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: **this do in remembrance of me.** Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22: 14-20

The scripture calls us to be mindful, or to put into remembrance, many things. In some meaningful ways, it is the singular mental operation that dominates our days, our time. Internally, I’m supposed to be mindful of, or to remember and to stir up remembrance of, all those things, or as many as I can muster at a time, which I should do, or act upon, or think, as a Christian soldier. Externally, I’m supposed to do what I can to stir my brothers and sister to, or put them in, remembrance of the same kinds of things, each of us, as iron sharpening iron, provoking one another unto love and to good works. But now we come to a very specific act of remembrance, the Lord Jesus Christ commanding his disciples, and all those who will follow, to take the bread and the cup, not as a reiteration of, but as a commemoration of, to put us in remembrance of ‘me’ – or the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a big concept – the biggest of all concepts. The act itself, or the taking of the bread and the cup, are themselves the triggers, or the way of remembering the Lord. At this point, the mind could race through all of the concepts, or attributes of the Living God, manifesting them each to the mind in the abstract. I might suggest, as a way of focus, especially to our dear young men and women, a few points of thought:

1. The Love of Christ toward His Bride, the church, is so great, so fixed, so sure, that all of human history and the culmination of it has been set up specifically to eternally unite them in that love. And nothing can separate

us from that. No persecution, no affliction, no satanic device, no sin, no suffering.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:35-39

And while history is normally thought of, by worldlings, as the sum total of human events looked upon and analyzed chronologically – that wars have been fought, empires have been built and toppled, inventions have changed the dynamics of whole civilizations and all others that follow – we know that all of human history has been designed, fashioned to glorify and magnify, eternally, God Almighty – to the eternal joy of His people and the eternal shame and damnation of all others. And beloved, the love that He has affixed upon His people is a tremendous part of that glory - the Bride of Christ is part of His glory. Through His comeliness. Through His righteousness. Through the efficaciousness of His blood. His story. That's all the world, this life, this earth, is about – His story.

2. All the sacrifices that had been performed throughout time – the millions of them – were all types of, and therefore pointed to – the blood of the Lamb. And all the persecutions and sufferings of His people, His prophets, were all types – of the unrighteous persecution, the sufferings, the sheer and utter humiliation, that the Lord endured – specifically for the sake of His people – His bride – the apple of His eye. His body was broken for us. This is my body, which is GIVEN FOR YOU. On the day that followed this Supper, in one day, the Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all of His people, for all time, from Adam to the last man – bore the sting of death – and pronounced victory over the grave. 'It is finished' - Christ said that. 'What is finished?' The expositors give many different answers here – not to say that they are in disagreement at all. But even thinking of how to open up such a pronouncement to the enlightened understanding

of the church. Wow. Not at all to suggest that this is either the best or even close to a full explication of that greatest of all pronouncements made by our Christ, our Saviour, our Redeemer, but here it is: sin was made an end of, full atonement and satisfaction for it were given; complete pardon procured, peace made, and redemption from all iniquity obtained; all enemies were conquered; all types, promises, and prophecies were fulfilled, and was sure and certain, and so complete, that nothing need, or could be added to it; and it was done entirely without the help of man, and cannot be undone.

Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: - 2Tim 1:9-10 He did that for us. Who can do that? I believe it to my core, yet it boggles the mind – it is a great mystery. This do in remembrance of me.

3. Luke 22:15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

Of this verse, Matthew Henry suggests: He knew it was to be the prologue to his sufferings, and *therefore* he desired it, because it was in order to his Father's glory and man's redemption. He *delighted* to do even this part of the *will of God* concerning him as Mediator. Shall we be *backward* to any service for him who was so *forward* in the work of our salvation? See the love he had to his disciples; he desired to eat it *with them*, that he and they might have a little time together, themselves, and none besides, for private conversation, which they could not have in Jerusalem but upon this occasion. He was now about to leave them, but was very desirous to *eat this passover with them before he suffered*, as if the comfort of that would carry him the more cheerfully through his sufferings, and make them the easier to him.

Shall we be *backward* to any service for him who was so *forward* in the work of our salvation?