

To Forget or Not To Forget-That Is The Answer

You might recall a well-known line in Shakespeare's play the Hamlet which goes: "To be or not to be, that is the question". Today I was thinking of something that could be entitled:

TO FORGET OR NOT TO FORGET—THAT IS THE ANSWER

We know from experience, especially as a Christian, that life is a battle. Daily we are presented with situations where we find ourselves looking for an answer.

In Ephesians 6:10-18 the apostle Paul gives the symbolism of battle armor to describe our fight with unseen spiritual dark forces.

"10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" (KJV)

These dark forces wage war with us beginning in our minds, using thoughts and impulses. They move on from there to take hold of our lives a little at a time on their quest to overtake our lives and create strongholds of defeat and destruction.

I want to take a few moments to show how our enemy's success or defeat depends heavily on what we choose to forget or what we choose to not forget.

A key thought:

What We Choose to Forget And What We Choose Not To Forget Impacts Our Life.

Let me explain.

An unfortunate, but well known fact about us human beings is:

We tend to remember what we should forget and then we forget what we should remember!

Here are some examples to illustrate what I mean:

THINGS WE USUALLY REMEMBER INSTEAD OF FORGETTING:

1. The wrongs done to us by others
2. The things we've done wrong to others
3. The times people let us down

4. Those hateful words people spoke to us or about us
5. Our failures and mistakes
6. Our losses
7. Times of sickness

This kind of remembering is in direct opposition to what the Lord tells us to do in His Word.

One of the greatest verses in the Bible that admonishes us to forget is Phil. 3:13 “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,” (KJV) (Emphasis mine).

Firstly, Paul says in that verse, “I count not myself to have apprehended:...” Apprehended what?

Let’s read from verse 8 in Phil. 3. “Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,⁹ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:¹⁰ that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;¹¹ if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.¹² Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” (KJV) (Emphasis mine)

So we see in those verses at least eight things Paul is trying to apprehend. Paul is saying that even though he hasn’t gotten there yet, he still continues to pursue these worthy goals with a sense of focus and purpose. The word ‘apprehended’ is translated from the Greek word ‘Katalambano’¹ meaning to ‘take eagerly’ to ‘seize’ or ‘obtain.’ Now in verse 13 he tells us that apprehending and attaining these goals has everything to do with ‘forgetting the past’.

And it’s noteworthy that in the next verse, verse 14 he reminds us that the overcoming life isn’t going to be easy. He writes, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

That word ‘press’ is translated from the Greek word ‘Dioko’² which has the idea of following after, pursuing something in the face of suffering or persecution.

Now getting back to that list of things we usually remember instead of forgetting, let us ask ourselves, “*How easy is it to forget...? (go back over the list above)*. We don’t have to try very long until we find ourselves tripping on our own efforts. We say to ourselves, “*I’m going to forget what so-and-so said to me*” and then the same hurtful thoughts come back again and again when that person comes to mind.” “I’m going to forget...” whatever we find weighing us down. It seems like just exercising sheer will to forget doesn’t work.

Now let’s look at another list.

THINGS WE USUALLY FORGET:

1. We forget the Lord
2. The daily blessings of food, water, shelter and clothing
3. The daily strength we receive from God—physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually
4. The way God turned our lives around when He saved us
5. The countless times He protected us when we were in danger and peril
6. He financially provided for us when it seemed there was no possible way out of our lack

7. How He used other people to bless us and encourage us
8. How he restored relationships when we had long before given up hope

This is just a very short list, we could go on and on.

Yes, **we remember the things we should forget and we forget what we should remember!**

TO FORGET OR NOT TO FORGET—THAT IS THE ANSWER

Paul the Apostle shows us that we can succeed in **forgetting**, by focusing on **remembering**. Let me explain.

‘Pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’ involves choosing to remember the promises of God in the face of the negative thought or circumstance.

Remembering the promise involves exercising faith and trust in the face of the negative situation or problem, believing and trusting a promise from God’s word right in the face of the hurtful memory, or negative situation.

Is that easy to do? As we saw earlier, it involves a fight, a pressing forward, a laying hold of the best God has for us. Hebrews 11:6 says, But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Here is a good place to repeat the key thought we said earlier:

What We Choose to Forget or Choose to Remember Impacts Our Life.

Let’s take a couple situations from our list of things we should forget and see how we might exercise faith to press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

- **We remember what someone said to us or about us that hurt us.**

This particular situation involves the need of forgiving. Does forgiving someone for a wrong imply what they did was OK? No.

But where we fail is that by not forgiving, we let the memory of the hurt become a stumbling block in our spiritual life instead of allowing God to make it a stepping stone to a better life. We don’t realize that holding grudges locks us into a self-made, suffocating prison.

We can choose to forget what was said or done to us and replace it with a remembering of what God can give us if we let go and let Him have the offense.

This is where our faith comes in. We choose to give over to Him our natural desire to get revenge. How do we do this?

We stop talking about the offense to others. We stop accusing the person who hurt us. We stop rehearsing the wrong over and over in our mind and heart. Instead we talk to the Lord about it. We ask Him to forgive us for holding onto the offense and being unforgiving. We ask Him to take the wrong done and replace it with the good He has for us.

When we do this, we can trust that God will free us from the pain and bitterness in our own heart. We have also made room in our life for God to bestow some new blessing He has been eager to give to us.

- **We remember our losses.**

When we continually remember our financial losses for instance, fear of lack and poverty steadily take over our thinking.

The Bible says in John 10:10 “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.” (KJV)

Fear is one of those thieves that come to break in and steal what God has given us or wants to give us. What does fear look like in this situation?

We look at our meager portion and project that sense of lack into the future. The Lord wants us to exercise faith in Him, to acknowledge that He is our Jehovah Jireh (the Lord our Provider) and watch Him turn the dry ground of our empty wallet into a refreshing pool of more than enough.

Deut. 8:18 says, “But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to



get wealth...” . (KJV)

Once again our key thought:

What We Choose to Forget or Choose to Remember Impacts Our Life

When we trust Christ to be our Savior, we trust Him not only with our sins but with every aspect of our lives. He says that when we trust Him and have faith in Him, it pleases Him. Heb. 11:6.

Do you know you have the opportunity to please your heavenly Father countless times a day simply by trusting Him, remembering that He is good when the doubts and fears of everyday life present themselves?

Do you know it pleases your heavenly Father?

- When you're waiting in a long line that's not moving and instead of getting irritated and impatient, you silently say from your heart, “Lord, my times are in Your hand.” Ps. 31:15 (KJV)
- When you've paid out all your money for bills and look at the meager amount balance in your check book and pray as the man of God prayed in 2 Chron. 25:9, “...The Lord is able **to give** thee **much more** than this.” (KJV)
- When you're tempted to get angry with someone but choose to walk away and say quietly or in your heart, “This is the day the Lord hath made, [I] will rejoice and be glad in it.” Ps. 118:24
- When we are languishing in physical pain and choose to breathe the words, “The Lord is my Refuge, a very present help [to me now in this time] of trouble.” Psalm 46:1 (KJV)

In these simple examples, we are choosing to forget the usual, human responses of fear, doubt, selfishness, anger and unforgiveness and remember the Lord. You can compare this to having a garden. Each time we forget the bad we are pulling the weeds in our spiritual lives. Then as we choose to not forget the Lord, but remember His goodness and power to change us and our situation, we are sowing seeds of life that will reap a harvest of good.



TO FORGET OR NOT TO FORGET—THAT IS THE ANSWER

The Lord wants us to **take the first list of things** (hurts, offenses, losses, failures) **and change the title to: Things we Forget.**



He wants us to **take the second list of things** (His goodness, forgiveness, power, lovingkindness and care) **and change the title to: Things we Remember.**

If you feel today that you have been allowing the devil to steal your life, your relationships, your finances, your health, your closeness to the Lord through harboring in your heart and mind doubts, fears, condemnation, anger and all the other weapons he uses;

If you feel like your spiritual life needs a jump start (like a battery that has lost its charge), God's Word has many promises to give you that jump start.

Two passages I recommend for you to find, read, start declaring and believing are:

Psalms 77:10-12 "And I said, This is my infirmity: **but I will remember** the years of the right hand of the most High. **I will remember** the works of the Lord: surely **I will remember** thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. (KJV) (Emphasis mine).

2 Kings 17:38-39, "And the covenant that I have made with you **ye shall not forget**; neither shall ye fear other gods. 39 But the Lord your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies." (KJV) (Emphasis mine).

¹ and ² Abingdon's Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
Copyright, 1890 by James Strong, Madison, NJ