

# **SERMON SERIES**

## **REDEEMPTIVE REMEMBERING**



**Part #1. What We Remember Shapes What We Become**

**Part #2. How to Grow a Healthy Spiritual Memory**

**Part #3. The Memory of God?**

## PART 1.

# WHAT WE REMEMBER CHANGES WHAT WE BECOME

### OPENING QUESTION:

*What is a memory you enjoy thinking through?*

### IS 'LIVING IN THE PRESENT' A MYTH?

*Not even one day is entirely present. All the hours of the day add up to twenty four. The first of them has the others in the future, the last has them in the past... A single hour is itself constituted of fleeing moments. If we can think of some bit of time which cannot be divided into even the smallest instantaneous moment, that alone is what we call "present". And this time flies so quickly from the future into the past that it is a moment with no duration. Any duration is divisible into past and future, the present occupies no space. (Augustine's Confessions, Vol 11,15:20).*

Saint Augustine says you can chop time up smaller and smaller and smaller, and no matter how small you get it never stops! Augustine's head must have been hurting when he wrote this! He realised that living in the present is like trying to stand on an infinitely sharp edge, or top a river flowing. The present 'occupies no space' because it is an impossibly infinitely small border between future and past. The present is gone the nanosecond you think of it. Saint Augustine was saying that you can never stop time or stay in a moment.

Or as Isaac Watts in 1708 said, attempting to put a 2500 year old psalm into English...

*Time like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away;  
They fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.*

People say 'don't live in the past'. From a brain point of view you can't do much else. By the time you process light in your eyes and register it in your brain, the light has moved another hundred meters and the electrons in your body have moved billions of times - more change has occurred than you can imagine. Your brain may be fast, but compared to the universe it's painfully slow. Our brains are always behind reality. When you perceive the present you're actually processing a distant past. When you think about the present you are already remembering it!

The Bible teaches a lot about remembering and remembrance. Remembering is a key to prayer, a key to praising God, a key to wisdom, a key to worship. The question is not whether you're going to live in the past. The question is whether you're going to live in healthy memory or toxic memory. What you choose to remember, to recall, to mull over, to give remembrance, will shape you totally. Remembering is a serious business. What we remember shapes what we become.

### TZAKAR - HEALTHY REMEMBERING

There's a kind of healthy remembering where we choose to remember something or someone, where we pause dealing with the present and worrying about the future, and for a moment live in the past! This can actually be healthy!

### **a. HEALTHY REMEMBERING FREES US FROM SLAVERY TO TIME**

At the very start of the Bible we first meet the people of Israel as slaves. After being set free, they are called to remember, to remember their past. Special days are setup for them - memorial days - see the 'mem' in memorial from remember? God says to them to have a day of remembering:

*Exodus 12:14*

*This day shall be for you a **memorial / remembering** day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord, throughout your generations, as a decree forever, you shall keep it as a feast.*

As they stop and remember, they are forced to stop rushing around now, called to stop preparing for the future and remember a good thing from the past.

As they do, it's as if time pauses. Even though it's a hundred years, or a thousand years, or four thousand years since the event, when they stop and remember that God set them free they are set free all over again.

Stop and remember something good, like your baptism, or your marriage day, or the way God got you through a hard time! When you stop and do that you are set free a little from being a slave of time, you sit in that memory of God's work, in the grace of God!

### **b. HEALTHY REMEMBERING PROTECTS SACRED THINGS**

In our lounge-room we have a photo of our marriage day. I love to stop and remember the way we were and the promises we made. As I do, that act of remembering protects a special sacred holy thing - my marriage. We need to stop and remember those God-given grace moments in the past and let them define us. Too often a person will find themselves in a bad situation, where temptation comes, and for a moment they might forget their marriage promises. But healthy remembering protects sacred things and keeps them holy. Notice the third commandment?

*Exodus 20:8 "Remember (TZAKAR) the Sabbath Day to keep it holy..."*

*Deuteronomy 5:12 "Preserve (SHAMAR) the Sabbath Day to keep it holy..."*

Oops. Is this a mistake? What happened? Did the command of God change? What do you think?

What is it that you need to remember, to hold in your mind, to intentionally bring to mind again?

### **c. HEALTHY REMEMBERING OPENS UP A BIGGER VIEW**

Every now and then I like to make my L-Plate daughter remember where she's come from. She might be on the motorway doing 100kmh and she will change lanes or pass someone. And I will say to her, "I remember when you couldn't do that, even changing lanes in a carpark was hard. Now you do it at 100kmh like a natural!" The progress might feel slow, but by remembering where we came from we can get a bigger (encouraging) view.

*Deuteronomy 7:17-18*

*[If you fear the great nations that you will face] ... you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt...*

What do you see in this advice?

If I remember how God got me through a disaster back then I know God can get me through it now!  
Grace brought me safe this far and grace will lead get me hoe.

### **WHAT WE CHOOSE TO REMEMBER CHANGES WHAT WE BECOME**

I am not saying you should try and forget the bad things in the past. Those that forget the mistakes of the past just repeat them. But we need to choose to remember healthy things in healthy ways. Choosing to actually stop and dwell on good gifts of memory that God has given will change who you become.

*Deuteronomy 32:7*

*Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations;  
ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you.*

*Hebrews 13:7-8*

*Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

You can choose to ruminate on the evil people have done to you. You can choose to nurse your grudges, to keep going over the bad stuff in your head. But that is not healthy remembering. In prayer, begin to replace that rumination on bad things, with remembering God-given good moments, to think of them, remember them, and give thanks.

It's All Saints Day! Who will you choose to remember and give thanks to God for?