

Yesterdays

*Memories*  
are tomorrows  
*Treasures*

**Part 2.**

**Is forgetting the past Biblical? Does the Bible instruct us to forget the past?**

*The apostle Paul ends a section in Philippians 3 by saying, “One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (verses 13–14).*

**Is Paul instructing us to forget everything that ever happened before we met Christ? Is this a command to purge our minds of all memories?**

**It is important to consider the passage that precedes these words. Paul had just listed all his religious qualifications that, to the Jewish mind, were of supreme importance. He then states, “I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (verse 8).**

**Paul is making the point that no fleshly accomplishment matters in comparison with knowing Christ and trusting in His righteousness alone for salvation (Ephesians 2:8–9).**

**Regardless of how good or how bad we may have been, we must all come to Christ the same way: humble, repentant, and undeserving of His forgiveness (Romans 5:8; Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,”**

**The word *forgetting* in this passage means “no longer caring for, neglecting, refusing to focus on.”**

*Our memories store millions of pieces of information gained through our senses since birth. Some experiences are impossible to forget, and any effort to forget them only makes them more prominent. Paul is not advising a memory wipe; he is telling us to*

***focus on the present and the future, rather than the past.***

***Philippians 1:3-5***, “I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,” (NIV)

***Luke 2:19***, “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (NIV)

***Luke 16:25***, “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.’” (NIV)

***John 14:26***, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (ESV)

**It’s easy to “live in the past.” Whether it’s a past victory that our minds continually replay or a past defeat that hangs over us like a shroud, it needs to be left in the past.**

- **Nothing hinders present service quite like being mired in another time.**
- **Modeling Paul’s forgetfulness means we count the past as nothing.**
  - *We cut the strings that tie us to that bygone moment.*
  - *We refuse to allow past successes to inflate our pride.*
  - *We refuse to allow past failures to deflate our self-worth.*

***We leave it behind and instead adopt our new identity in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”***

**We are not to forget everything, however, in the sense of being oblivious to it.**

**There are many times God instructs us to remember.**

- **In Deuteronomy 9:7, Moses tells the Israelites to “remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the Lord your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord.”**
- **We are encouraged to remember all God has done for us (Psalm 77:11, “I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.”; 103:2, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits”, **others who are suffering for Christ’s sake (Hebrews 13:3, “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.; and what we****

were before Jesus saved us (**Ephesians 2:11–12**, *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.”*)

- **But...the remembering should be to the glory of God and for our spiritual benefit.**
  - **If we are cleansed by the blood of Christ, then no judgment remains for past failures (**Romans 8:1**, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”*)**
  - **If God chooses not to remember our past sins (**Hebrews 8:12**, *“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*) we can choose to set them aside as well and embrace the future He promises to those who love Him (**Romans 8:28** *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*; **Ephesians 2:10**)**

**Question: “Will we remember our earthly lives when we are in Heaven?”**

**Answer: Isaiah 65:17 says, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”** Some interpret Isaiah 65:17 as saying that we will have no memory of our earthly lives in heaven. However, one verse earlier in Isaiah 65:16, the Bible says, “For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.”

- It is likely only our “past troubles” that will be forgotten, not all of our memories.
- Our memories will eventually be cleansed, redeemed, healed, and restored, not erased. There is no reason why we could not possess many memories from our earthly lives.
- The memories that will be cleansed are the ones that involve sin, pain, and sadness.
  - ✓ Revelation 21:4 declares, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Remember this thought).

**The fact that the former things will not come to mind does not mean that our memories will be wiped clean.**

- **The prophecy could be suggesting the wondrous quality of our new environment. The new earth will be so spectacular, so mind-blowing, that everyone will quite forget the drudgery and sin of the current earth.**
- **(Theology Questioned): It's important to make a distinction between the eternal state and the current heaven. When a believer dies, he or she goes to heaven, but that is not our final destination. The Bible speaks of "a new heaven and a new earth" as our eternal, permanent home. Both passages quoted above (Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1) refer to the eternal state, not the current heaven. The promise of wiping away every tear does not come until after the tribulation, after the final judgment, and after the re-creation of the universe.**

**Paul speaks of being transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven. What does he mean?**

**In his apocalyptic vision, John sees sorrow in heaven: "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'" (Revelation 6:9-10).**

- *John is obviously in heaven (Revelation 4:1-2), and he sees and hears those who obviously remember the injustice done to them.*
- *Theology questioned: Their loud calls for vengeance indicate that, in the current heaven, we will remember our lives on earth, including the bad things. The current heaven of Revelation 6 is temporary, though, giving way to the eternal state in Revelation 21.*

**The story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) is further proof that the dead remember their earthly lives.**

- *The rich man in hell asks Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn the rich man's brothers of the fate awaiting the unrighteous (verses 27-28). The rich man obviously remembers his relatives.*
- *He also remembers his own life of self-serving and sinful comfort (verse 25). The memories of the rich man in hell become part of his misery.*
- *The story does not mention whether or not Lazarus has memories, but Abraham has definite knowledge of goings-on on earth (verse 25).*
- *It's not until we reach the eternal state that the righteous will leave all sorrow behind.*

**My memory just isn't quite as good as it used to be.**

*I'm not yet as bad as the man who went to see his doctor, complaining of forgetfulness. "I am having trouble remembering much of anything at all," he said. The doctor asked, "How long have you had this problem?" The man replied, "What problem?"*

**You know why we joke about it? Because it hurts too much to cry.**

**Memory is a wonderful gift from God:**

- **When accepted and used redemptively enables us to live more faithfully to the One who walks beside us and bids us be like him.**
- **Memories enables us to cope with the present.**
  - ✓ **After all, how would life be now if we didn't have the benefit of remembering the past?**
  - ✓ **What if you had to start every day from scratch, with no context of your previous experience to guide you?**

**But don't forget the promises Jesus makes. Jesus will send his Spirit to guide the disciples and us in knowing all the things they will need to do. Is that not what memories are... the encouragement we need to continue in the faith when times are difficult?**

**A vital part of our collective faith as a congregation of believers is the making of memories for those who follow us.**

**How, indeed, will we be remembered?**

- *Those people we share our hearts with as we study God's Word in the Worship Service and laugh and cry in our Home Bible Studies.*
- *Our family...did we slip and fall and stay down...or did we pick ourselves up and start over again trying harder next time to get to the finish line?*

**Prayer to close this session:**

*Our memories are precious indeed, O Lord. Help us to remember and then forge faithfully into the future, trusting your Spirit to be our guide. Through Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.*