

"Don't Forget to Remember" Psalm 106:7-21

We are a forgetful people. It is far too easy for us to lose sight of who God is and what He has done in our lives. The people of Israel in the Old Testament provide a perfect example of the consequences of such forgetfulness. If we learn from their mistakes, we can grow as people who practice gratitude and remembrance so that we will not lose sight of our Great God and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The more important something is, the more crucial it is to remember it. The greater the significance of something, the greater the benefits will be of remembering it, and the greater the consequences will be if you forget it.

Israel

I want to take a quick look at the OT, because I think that the nation of Israel is the poster-child for the importance of remembrance. Israel was brought into existence when God called an idol-worshipping pagan named Abraham out of his false religion and made a series of staggering promises with him, which included huge plans for God to reveal Himself to a world that had rejected him and graciously bless this rebellious world through Abraham's descendants.

500 or so years into their existence, they had multiplied as a people group but still had no real semblance of a nation... no land, no constitution, and no freedom. They found themselves oppressed and enslaved by Egyptian rule. In the most miraculous event in their history (and the history of any nation up until that point), God provided for their freedom in what we have come to call the Exodus... the mass departure, the mass freeing of 2 million people from Egyptian slavery. God brought them out of Egypt to give them their own land and confirm His promises and establish them as His people, a God-centered people that would reflect His goodness and provision to a fallen, godless world... if they would follow Him.

On the very day of this Exodus, Moses, God's appointed foreman for the task of their deliverance, speaks up and says to the people of Israel:

EXODUS 13:3

"Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place."

This is a hugely significant event in their history, so we should see massive benefits if they listen to Moses and remember this day. On the flipside, we can expect to see great consequences if they forget.

PSALM 106:7

"Our Fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of Your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea."

The Pharaoh of Egypt changed his mind about letting them go after all, and the feared Egyptian army is closing in on them, and they're trapped. The people panic, and in the stress and fear and heat of the moment, they forget who their God was and what their God had already done. Listen to their complaint.

"Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done in bringing us out of Egypt? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:11).

Forgetfulness turned to bitterness and grumbling, and they are already prepared to turn around and go back to being slaves. In spite of their complaint, God delivers them.

PSALM 106:8-12

"Yet He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make known His mighty power. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and He led them through the deep as through a desert. So He saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. Then they believed his words; they sang His praise."

Having seen the goodness of their God again, they are given a new opportunity to remember His works and trust Him.

VERSE 13 "But they soon forgot His works."

Exodus 15 tells us that 3 days later they couldn't find fresh water, so they started grumbling at Moses again. Notice a pattern? God graciously provides water, but then they grumbled about food.

"Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Ex. 16:3).

God graciously provides them with daily bread, but it wasn't good enough, so their complaints continued.

"Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic" (Numbers 11:4).

I wish I could say it got better, but it didn't. It got worse.

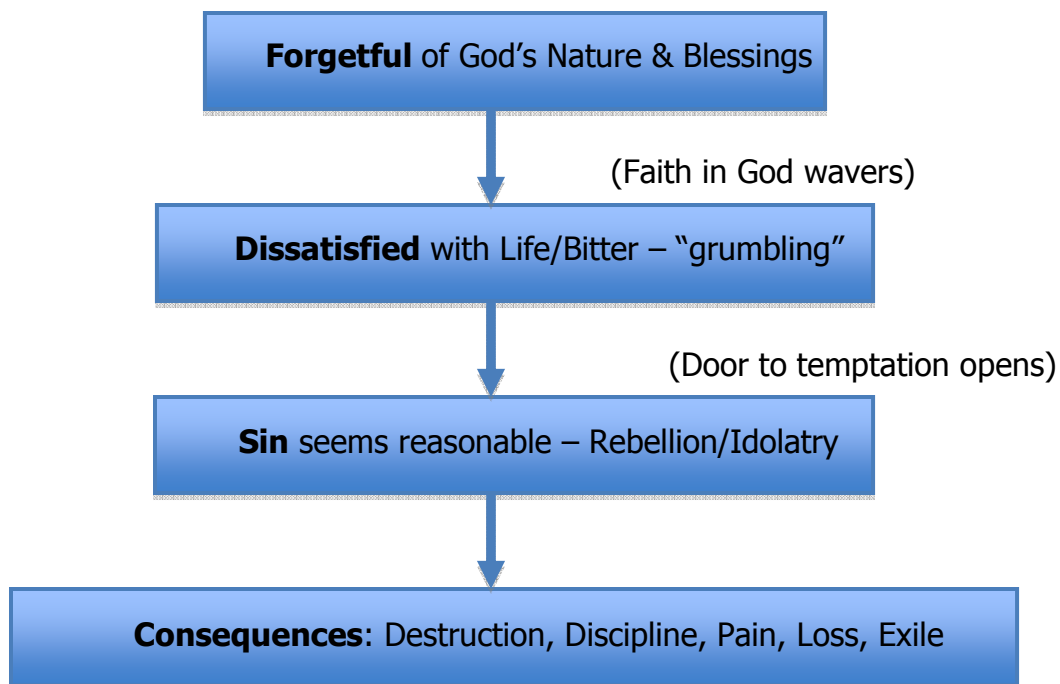
PSALM 106:19-21

"They made a calf in Horeb and worshipped a metal image. They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt."

We have seen their forgetfulness turn to grumbling and dissatisfaction, but here it goes a step further. Forgetfulness turns to unfaithfulness and idolatry in the wilderness. The Israelites had a perfectly reliable and proven source, yet present circumstances caused them to lose sight of Him altogether and seek their satisfaction and help in something else.

Look at the consequences of their forgetfulness:

- Thousands would die from plagues because stopped trusting YHWH and started hoping in other gods.
- An entire generation would die in the wilderness because they forgot that if God could overthrow Pharaoh, He could probably handle the strong nations in Canaan.
- The entire book of Judges is about Israel forgetting God, doing whatever seemed right to them, rebelling against God, and getting oppressed by the nations that they were supposed to be ruling over. Only in their pain and despair did they realize that their false gods were failing them, and they would call out to YHWH.
- During the time of the Kings of Israel, the fate of the nation would hang on this single principal. Good kings remembered who God was and what He had done, and the nation prospered as their leadership followed YHWH. Bad kings would worship other gods and lead the nation into ruin. More of them forgot God and than chose to remember. Eventually, the Israelites, God's unique and privileged people, would be exiled from their land and almost entirely ruined because of their idolatry.



Here's the thing: I don't think this is only their problem.

As I walk through life, there are times when the reality of God's goodness and grace loses its rightful place in the forefront of my mind. Busyness, stress, change, challenges in marriage,

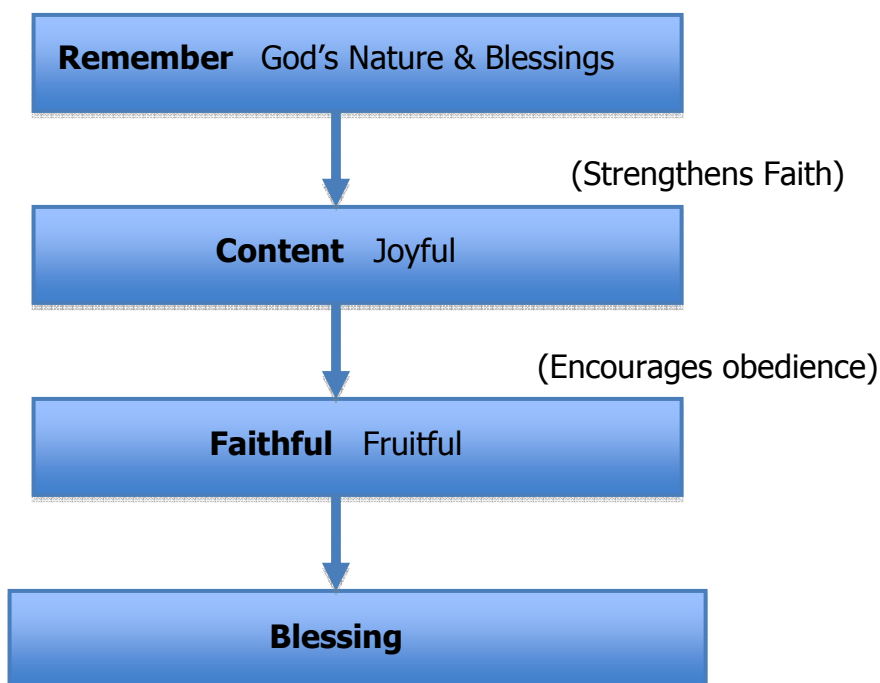
etc. cause me to lose sight of who God is and what He has done. I become dissatisfied as I fixate only on the things in my life that I wish were different, and I start to grumble a little. The door to temptation opens – life is hard, so what’s the solution? What will satisfy me? Having lost sight of the only One who really can satisfy, I look for other things. My heart becomes rebellious, sin seems reasonable, and if unaddressed, some serious sin issues develop in my life. And sin always lead to pain, disappointment, and loss. It’s even more ridiculous for it to happen to me, because I have seen and heard about greater things than they experienced. Sure God did huge miraculous things in front of their very eyes, but we have received a greater revelation through Jesus Christ.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Ephesians 1:7

Redemption - the action of buying someone’s freedom, of paying a debt in order to release someone from slavery.

As Israel was “redeemed” from their great adversary, the good news of Jesus Christ is that on His cross, He was not simply breathing His last breath. He was paying for the debt of our rebellion in order to clean our slates before God and purchase our freedom from the most prevalent slave-owner in existence, a master whose name is Sin. Through the blood of His cross, we are redeemed, forgiven and free, all of this through the riches of His grace, His compassionate, slow-to-anger, undeserved love.

We must be mindful of these things daily. We must fight to keep them at the front of our minds, because without a doubt, difficulties of this life will cause you to question God’s goodness.



APPLICATION

1) Practice Gratitude

- a. List of 5 things you are thankful for every night before you go to sleep.
- b. Journal. Intentionally steer your mind to think about who God is and what He has done.
- c. Create books of remembrance. We do this with everything else. Baby books, high school or college scrapbooks, wedding albums.

2) Practice Confession

- a. Inevitably, you will lose sight of God's goodness at some point and start to grumble. When you do, it is imperative that you have people who you can honestly confess to.
- b. Jon and Danny are lifelines to me when I start to fixate on my difficulties rather than my blessings. Without them, I have no doubt that I am capable of making great mistakes as a result of my forgetfulness.

"I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder" 2 Peter 1:13