

TCC Sunday 28th December 2014 PM “Ready, steady – 2015 here we come!” (Part 2 of 2)

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Purpose: To consider a second practical and functional resource to have ready for going into 2015. To consider the BIBLICAL THEME of MNEMONIC DEVICES, things we should remember and not forget.

INTRODUCTION

This morning I gave the first of really a 2-part message regarding how we can be resourced to come into the New Year in just a couple of days.

We had there the THEME of the Kingdom, which is a very powerful stabilizing idea which should steady us and ready us for tougher times.

This evening I want to give you a collection of things, so another tool in your toolbox, and this concept is one that appears many times in the Scripture.

Remember/Forget in Scripture

Now, there are a couple of closely related words that taken together have BOTH a prominence AND an emphasis right across the Scriptures:

- No less than 300 times in Scripture do we find the words REMEMBER and FORGET (in their various forms)

Thus these are very PROMINENT words

- In addition, when we do come across these words, they are usually making particularly important points.

There is a built-in EMPHASIS that is being underscored – because certain things NEED to be REMEMBERED and MUST NOT be overlooked by being FORGOTTEN.

This evening

What I want to do for this evening is to provide you a SECOND RESOURCE to take with you into 2015.

And this very functional, very practical resource is that distinct set of things that you will REMEMBER and NOT FORGET.

Cherry Picking – 7 things

For this I want to do some CHERRY PICKING and I have selected 7 things that, if we do *NOT* LOSE SIGHT OF THEM, these things will SPIRITUALLY serve us well.

As there are 7 things (the number of completeness and perfection) I am not therefore going to spend a long time on any of them.

Doing this exercise does beg an interesting question and that is:

Q. What would you choose to remember?

Q. Given a few moments to think – what would likely go on your TOP 7 LIST?

Well, I suspect that a lot of things you might choose will likely overlap with things I’m going to cover.

I suppose one possible advantage of my list is that they are all coming very directly off the pages of Scripture.

So, without further ado, let’s work our way through them:

#1 – HIS WORD

Now in the OT the LORD gave his people a special memory aid, so that they would remember his words, and it is probably one that is a bit surprising – it was the tassel.

In [Numbers chapter 15 verses 37-40](#) we read:

“The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to **MAKE TASSELS** on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each **tassel**. You will have these **tassels** to look at and **so you will remember all the commands of the Lord**, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. **Then you will remember to obey all my commands** and will be consecrated to your God.”

In [Deuteronomy 8 verses 10-11](#), as Moses was preparing the people for moving into the promised land, we read:

“When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.”

Now it was not just tassels that were to be a visual memory aid, they put boxes on the doorpost and had phylacteries on their foreheads and arms and as well as this they were told to put up some stones as well:

[Deuteronomy 27 verses 1-3](#) “Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: “Keep all these commands that I give you today. When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the Lord your God is giving you, set up **some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law** when you have crossed over to enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.”

A couple of verses further on: the requirement is stipulated again for emphasis and absolute clarity:

[Verse 8](#) “**And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up.**”

Now I am not telling you something that you do not know – but just because we know something doesn’t mean that we end up taking it very seriously or giving it any prime focus OR pride of place in our lives from day to day.

Ok that's #1'

#2 – HIS DEEDS

Psalm 105 verse 4-5 says:

“Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.
Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced...”

Psalm 78 verse 4 speaks of passing these on to future generations:

“We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation **the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.**”

Once again remembering the deeds of the LORD was taken seriously and they used VISIBLE DEVICES to fix these in their memories.

Like us they realised that “Out of sight could well mean out of mind.”

Let me give you a couple of examples:

Take Joshua 4 when they successfully crossed the waters of the Jordan on dry ground (a smaller version of the earlier Exodus across the Red Sea) – we read:

“When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”

The passage goes on:

“In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.
These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

This was a practical outworking of some words that Moses had spoken to them earlier on when he said:

(Deuteronomy 4 verse 9):

“...be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”

Perhaps you remember another important incident in Israel's history when the Philistines were oppressing, and very much dominating, the Israelites in the time of Samuel:

1 Samuel 7 verses 10-12 “But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. Then Samuel **took a stone and set it up** between Mizpah and Shen. He named it **Ebenezer**, saying, “**Thus far has the Lord helped us.**”

Q. I wonder if you have any MNEMONIC or MEMORY DEVICES that help you to fix permanently in your mind the things that the LORD has clearly done in your life?

#3 – HIS COVENANT

Covenant, when you come across it in the Scripture, speaks of God’s intentional, personal, intimate and binding relationship that He has chosen to forge with us His people.

Appreciating this consistent context for the word COVENANT when we meet it in the Bible – we are not so surprised when we meet statements like this one in Deuteronomy 4 Verse 23:

“Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

And so we are not surprised to read of God’s white hot jealousy that is aroused when we turn to other loves apart from Him.

A couple of verses further on (Verse 29-31) we read that God Himself does not forget the covenant – so therefore why should we lose sight of it:

“But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey him.

For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you **or forget the covenant with your forefathers**, which he confirmed to them by oath.”

Now, although I am quoting quite a bit from the OT – this is not just seen there:

Remember – **Zechariah’s Song** (That thing they call the ‘Benedictus’):

(Luke 1 verse 68-75) I’ll read the opening section:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— to show mercy to our fathers **and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham**: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

#4 – HIS DAY

The only commandment in the 10 commandments that tells us to REMEMBER is the 4th one:

Exodus 20 Verse 8

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...”

God is keen about the Sabbath – it arises as a Creation principle in the opening chapters of the Bible and didn’t fall out somewhere along the way.

So:

- we do well not to forget it, **in fact**
- we do well to delight in it

There is a lovely promise that comes attached to the Sabbath (and you thought that the only commandment that had a promise attached to it was the 5th commandment to honour your father and mother!!).

Isaiah 58 and the final verse (Verse 14) reads:

“... you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”

OK – so far then we got one hand full of IMPORTANT MEMORY AIDS:

- his WORDS
- his DEEDS
- his COVENANTS
- his DAY

So rounding up a bit, let’s pop a few MNEMONIC TOOLS in the other hand:

#5 – HIS BENEFITS

Job correctly perceives one side of the “BENEFITS EQUATION” when he says (Job 22 verse 2):

“Can a man be of benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him?”

Well the obvious answer to that rhetorical question, is of course NO!

However, the psalm writer puts the other side of things in that wonderful Psalm 103 (verses 1-5):

“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the Lord, O my soul, **and forget not all his benefits—**

who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

The greatest, the highest, the most precious benefit is one that is frequently made a target for our REMEMBRANCE that is our REDEMPTION, our DELIVERANCE from the MERCILESS SLAVERY OF SIN.

PASSOVER was the chief of the 3 annual feasts that God setup for the Israelites on the evening of their departure from Egypt.

Deuteronomy 16 (Verses 2-3) is one place that this celebration is described:

"Sacrifice as the Passover to the Lord your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his Name. Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—**SO THAT all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt.**"

We know that this is an important thing to remember because at really strategic moments it is dropped into things – one good illustration of this would be at the point when the 10 Commandments are about to be given:

Exodus 20 (Verses 1&2):

"And God spoke all these words: (and it would be easy at this point to mistake what immediately follows as the first commandment) "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

#6 – HIS PEOPLE

One notable occasion when the Apostle Paul went up to get acquainted with the leaders in Jerusalem, we read the following:

Galatians 2 verses 9&10 "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. (You could easily reason that that would conclude the paragraph quite nicely. However it goes on:)

All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."

The letter to the Hebrews kicks off its final, wrapping up chapter like this:

(Hebrews 13 Verse 1-3) "Keep on loving each other as brothers. (And then it proceeds to show how:)
Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.
Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Getting towards the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Galatians he says:

(Galatians 6 verses 9&10) "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

#7 – HIMSELF

You know in all of these "Good Things" and in all of these "God things" it is just so easy, somehow, to still FORGET God Himself.

There was one occasion when Nehemiah had to try and strengthen the morale of the people as they were rebuilding the wall because they were coming under sustained attack from their enemies.

And this is what he says:

(Nehemiah 4 Verse 14) "After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

I want to wrap up with a lovely quote from **Psalm 63 (Verses 1-6)**:

"O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,
my body longs for you,
in a dry and weary land
where there is no water.

- 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
- 3 Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
- 4 I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
- 5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

- 6 **On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.**

CONCLUSION

Maybe, even before this year is out, you will find that sleep eludes you – Q. So what could you do with all that time? Well, why not make use of these Biblical Mnemonics, these Scriptural Memory Devices:

- remember His Words
 - His Deeds
 - His Covenant
 - His Day
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- Do not forget His Benefits
 - His People and most centrally of all
 - Do not forget the LORD Himself –

as the Psalm confesses:

“...on my bed I remember you, I think of you in the night watches.”

Let’s pray... AMEN