

**“IS GOD AS FORGETFUL AS WE ARE?”**

**Philippians 3:12-14**

**June 10, 2018**

**Holiday Island Presbyterian Church**

**<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

**Philippians 3:12-14**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**I think I can safely say**

**that we are forgetful people.**

**Every one of us in this room.**

**Whether it is a function of our age,**

**or a function of getting distracted,**

**or we simply have overloaded our brains**

**with too much data.**

**We forget things.**

**I must confess that I spent the whole of this past week**

**preparing for Father’s Day worship**

**only to find out on Friday afternoon**

**that Father’s Day is NEXT Sunday!**

**That explains the rather strange worship bulletin.**

**And I am very grateful to Roxanne**

**who not only gently pointed out my error**

**but also helped me recover from it.**

**Yeah, we forget things.**

**Birthdays, anniversaries,  
where we left our keys,  
names, zip codes, phone numbers.  
The list is long.**

**There's the story about two couples who are visiting each other.  
One man turns to the other man and begins to describe  
the most wonderful restaurant he and his wife found.**

**The atmosphere was absolutely perfect,  
the service was swift and gracious,  
the food was beyond description  
the portions were huge  
and the price was ridiculously cheap.**

**The second man wanted to know the name of the restaurant.**

**The first man thought for a moment,  
then asked:  
"What's the name of that flower . . .  
. . . the red one with the thorns?"**

**His friend replied: "Rose?"**

**"Yeah," said the first man.  
"Hey, Rose, where did we eat last night?"**

**It's funny – but sadly it points to our ability to forget.**

**But there are a few things we do not forget.**

**TWO SIDES OF FORGETFULNESS:**

**There are two sides to being forgetful.**

**One way of looking at forgetfulness is  
it is a spiritual disease.**

**In the Book of Deuteronomy,  
Moses has to remind the Israelites over and over  
not to forget God and God's deliverance from Egypt  
and God's promise to sustain them.**

**When the water was in short supply,  
when the food was running out,  
when the people were tired and had lost their vision  
they began to forget God.**

**Unfortunately,  
we haven't progressed very far over the centuries.**

**When everything is going really well,  
our investments are prospering,  
our children are happy and healthy,  
and life is good . . .  
. . . we forget God's part in all of that.**

**Conversely,  
when everything goes south on us,  
and bad things seem to keep happening to us,  
and the darkness of gloom and doom presses in,  
. . . we forget the Delivering God.**

**This "forgetfulness" is a spiritual disease.  
It has a way of eating away at our peace and happiness  
the same way cancer eats away our bodies.**

**Out of the blue,**

for no apparent reason,  
someone will take a dislike to us or something we did  
and they will stomp all over our feelings.

How likely are we to forget that?

We'll hang onto that hurt long past time to lay that burden down.  
We'll spend far too much time scheming how to get even.  
We'll waste spiritual energy on it for too long.

We think – and re-think – what we should have said;  
we plan what we will say if we get a chance.

You see,  
we are quick to ask for forgiveness . . .  
. . . to ask God to *forget* our sins . . .

But we forget the part of the prayer that says:  
*Forgive our sins . . . as we forgive those who sin against us!*

And now you begin to see the other side of forgiveness.

We ask God to forgive and forget . . .  
. . . yet we are unwilling or unable to do the same.

An elderly man in Ireland was walking along a road  
carrying a huge sack of potatoes.

Along came a man in a wagon  
who stopped and offered the man with the potatoes a ride.

The old man accepted,  
climbed up on the wagon  
took his seat  
and continued to hold onto the potatoes.

**The driver of the wagon invited the old man  
to put his potatoes down and rest.**

**The old man replied:**

**“You give me the ride; I’ll carry the potatoes!”**

**You see, when God offer us to forgive and forget our sins  
and we aren’t willing to do the same for others,  
we’re not much better than the old Irishman.**

**We want to hang on to the hurts –**

**- we seek justice –**

**- we want our nemesis to hurt as badly as we do.**

**What we forget is**

**God is willing and able to deliver us from that pain!**

**Paul had this advice for the people of Philippi:**

**Not that I have already obtained (complete maturity in the  
faith – or the ability to move completely beyond the pain  
caused by other people) or have already arrived at my goal,  
but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took  
hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to  
have taken hold of it. But 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. Philippians 3:12-14**

**GOD’S FORGETFULNESS:**

**So, we arrive at the question of the day:**

**Do you believe that God is capable of forgetfulness?**

**Be very careful with your answer.**

**Your answer is like a double-edge razor –**

- which they still make, by the way.

**What you believe about God's ability to forget  
has a huge impact on all you believe about God.**

**Surely you don't believe that God can simply forget about us?!?  
The One who created us,  
Who sacrificed His Son for us?  
Who sustains us daily through the Holy Spirit?**

**How could God forget?  
How can a God who is all-knowing simply forget *anything*?**

**Yet God has specifically said that our sins and transgressions  
will be completely and totally forgotten!**

**We are promised full and complete forgiveness  
if we will repent and ask for forgiveness.**

**Now, in no way does this give us a license to continue to sin.  
Neither does it mean we shouldn't confess our sins.**

**What should be clear to us,  
is that God doesn't continue holding our sins over our head  
after they have been forgiven.**

**As humans, we find it difficult  
to understand how His forgiveness can be that complete.**

**But that is what the Bible reveals.**

**In Psalm 103:12, we read:**

***"As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our  
transgressions from us"***

**In Isaiah 43:25, we read:**

*“It is I [God] who sweeps away your transgressions for My own sake and remember your sins no more.”*

**In Jeremiah 31:34, we read:**

*This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts and write them on their minds... I will never again remember their sins and their lawless acts.*

**In the Book of Hebrews 8:12, we read:**

*For I will be merciful to their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins.*

**Let there be no doubt –**

**God has promised – and will - forget our sins!**

**Now, that’s willful forgetfulness . . .**

**. . . something my wife accuses me of often.**

**The central message of the New Testament**

**is centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ –**

**- the reality that the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ  
is credited to us when we trust in Him  
as our Lord and Savior.**

**What that means for us,**

**is that when we make the commitment to follow Jesus,  
through faith in Him,**

**all our past and present sins**

**are completely forgiven,**

**and completely forgotten**

**when we repent and ask forgiveness.**

**So, if that is true – and I assure you it is absolutely true –**

**- then why do we insist on carrying around the sack of potatoes  
that are past hurts and remorse?**

**Why do we choose to continue to live  
under the burden and cloud of guilt and shame?**

**Is it because we have failed to understand and accept  
the biblical truth that God's forgiveness  
includes God's perfect forgetfulness of our sins?**

**No, I think we are smarter than that.  
I think most of us believe the promises.**

**We have just forgotten what the promises are  
and what they mean to each of us!**

### **CONCLUSION:**

**In the Book of James 1:22-25 we read this:**

**“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.<sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not  
do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a  
mirror<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and  
immediately forgets what he looks like.<sup>25</sup> But whoever looks  
intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues  
in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they  
will be blessed in what they do.”**

**I think our egos – our self-esteem,  
our sometimes-false sense of self-worth gets in the way  
and we *forget* the wonderful promises we are offered  
by God through Jesus Christ.**

**We get so wrapped up in *us*  
and we thirst for justice  
and we forget that the last thing we want is justice!**



**In a very selfish way,  
we believe that Christ dies for *our* sins  
but certainly *not* for the sins of others –  
- especially those who hurt us.**

**Jesus gave us the model we are to follow.  
From the Cross, He was able to say:  
“Forgive them, Father, they know not what they do.”**

**Jesus told us it would be difficult to follow Him.  
And indeed, it is, at times.**

**However, if you want to live the life that God calls you to,  
the first step is to begin to *remember*.**

**Remember that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”  
Remember to thank God that God sometimes forgets.  
Remember to ask God for the strength to forget.**

**And let's begin living a life of peace and prosperity!**