Precious Memories

"I will remember the works of the LORD."
—Psalm 77:11

A GOOD MEMORY IS A prized possession. It can be defined as the process of recalling to mind facts previously learned, or past experiences. It involves retaining or reviving in the mind our past thoughts, images and ideas. It may further be looked at as remembrance, recollection, or reminiscence. In the educational setting, and in matters of life in general, we have been shown that repetition of information, study, practice, rehearsal of important facts and concepts, leads to learning. Truly the saying applies, "practice makes perfect." Our Heavenly Father created man with the ability to remember, and so when Adam was created he had the perfect capacity to remember fully the words of the Father.

To forget, or to be forgetful, is part of the Adamic curse. That is why we must constantly go back to the Lord's storehouse for more instruction, and to hear more of the Word of God that we would not only hear his instruction but also be receptive to his Word, and teachings. Since we realize the condition

that we are in, we strive to apply the verse, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Here we have implied how much we need to do, and how careful we need to be that we are making progress along the lines that would be pleasing to God. We are being urged to 'study' to know what God would approve—study the doctrine, study our course of conduct, study our hearts, and study ourselves—that we may know our strengths and weaknesses. We are to then apply what we have learned, being not only a student, but also a doer of his will.

REMEMBERING OUR VOWS

"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." (Ps. 116:12-14) These words should be familiar to us all, because they show how we should begin each day with the inquiry as to what are the possibilities of our service or sacrifice. We are really reaffirming our heart's desire to be, to do, to suffer in fellowship with our Lord. We should desire, by his grace, to make each day the best so far of our Christian lives; each day that of our largest endeavors and largest successes in self-sacrifice. We must make progress in overcoming the world, and the spirit of the world. We are to strive to put down the weaknesses and desires of the flesh, resist the Adversary, and to do all that we can to glorify our Lord and in blessing his people.

Do we daily have the words from Psalm 116 committed to our hearts and minds so that they may become part of our character? May I approach you Father, through your son Christ Jesus my Lord, that I will daily remember at the throne of grace those of like precious faith? "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. . . . And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."—Col. 3:13,15

REMEMBERING OUR FATHER'S GRACE

How precious are our memories? They are so important that we have been told to vow to remember to do the will of God daily in our lives. We owe our all to the Father through his Son as we are told, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."—I Cor. 8:6

Remember the words that we are given from the Father, "Ye are not your own, For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (chap. 6:19, 20) Our understanding of this verse shows us that our time, talent, influence, money, and all that we would consider precious, or in any degree valuable, properly belongs to the Lord, even life itself. "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward

man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—II Cor. 4:14-18

As we advance as Christians, we should recall life's experiences, its joys and sorrows. We become stronger in the Lord and in the power of his might by communion with Jesus in spirit. Paul was energized by the message of God's Word, which spoke to him peace, and a relationship to God through Christ. We have the same favors of God, the same promises of God, the same inspiring hopes that Jesus and the apostles had. Paul's inward man had the assurance of the Lord that the glories of the future would be proportionate to the trials faithfully endured. Those in the school of Christ can appreciate that the trials that are upon them, are manifestations of Divine favor. The things of this world, and its temptations, are not for those who strive to walk in the Lord's footsteps.

So thanks be to God our Father that by his grace he has preserved us, kept us from falling each day so far, and that we continue to serve him with our whole heart, so that we may "resist stedfast in the faith." (I Pet. 5:9) We do trust then that the body of Christ—the spiritual house of Israel—cannot be shaken, because it is firmly founded upon the rock, Christ Jesus. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 2:5) For those who are walking in

Christ's footsteps, the church class was bought with the precious blood of Christ.

As the church will be the temple of God in his future kingdom, perfect on the heavenly plane, so each member, begotten of the Holy Spirit as a New Creature, should realize that God is dwelling with them and that he has promised, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." (Rev. 3:12) If we have the Holy Spirit ruling in our mortal bodies, how then can we have other than the peace of God ruling there also.

CONSIDER HIM

Since we are imperfect beings, we need the strength and comfort that comes to us from keeping our minds focused on our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12:3) We are being told to study, comprehend, and appreciate his course, his example and teaching. The thought again is to take note of, have in mind, reflect upon, and remember. We are to consider the meekness, patience, and sufferings of Christ which he endured unjustly, and take courage from the life of the beloved Master. In our trials and difficulties, remember what hard experiences in suffering that the Lord endured. We should then be glad that our Lord has invited us to walk in his footsteps, to endure the same experiences, to drink whatever the Father shall pour out for us from his cup. When trying experiences came to him he realized that they were under the supervision of the Father. He told us concerning our experiences, "Be of good

cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) It is then our desire to faithfully endure to the end as he did.

GOD'S PROMISES

One of the most important things that we can do is to daily lay hold upon the wonderful promises of God. (II Pet. 1:4; I Cor. 15:49; I John 3:1-3) What comes into your mind when God's promises are recalled? Perhaps they include the words that show that one day, "they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35:10) It should also include, "Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." (Heb. 8:11) "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Isa. 35:5,6) This scripture points to the joys of physical and spiritual imperfections being removed. Perhaps it is "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." (Matt. 13:16) He is speaking of a special group of people, who have given their all to the Lord, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."—Col. 1:27,28

We are being told that we need to take heed that our heart is entirely being emptied of self-will. This takes daily practice, remembering to put the Lord first in our lives. "That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. 4:12) We are

being reminded that if we do these things, leading a life pleasing to God, and progressing properly along the narrow way, we will be raised up, going on to glory, honor, and immortality. It is based on a life centered around the thought to, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and . . . love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:37,39) Also, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12; II John 5) "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb. 12:2) "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing [remembering] that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."—Rom. 5:1-5

Let us focus on verse 4—patience, experience, hope—and especially on experience. First of all, that in the exercise of patience the lessons have made us stronger, and have increased our faith, zeal and gratitude. To recall our experiences concerning God's love, wisdom, grace, and comfort will further strengthen our confidence in him. The person who would relate an experience of what the Lord has done for them, must at the same time look at what they have done for the Lord.

We should understand that our Christian experience is not sitting down, and letting the Spirit of God work in our hearts, and do nothing. Ardent songs, prayers, and Christian fellowship are not

the only things that are inspiring. Experience is gained by putting off the old man; it is growth in grace, building our character, and striving to keep unspotted from the world. This implies an active service.

Divine love has been shown to us by his grace, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (vs. 8) We remember his teachings, and strive to apply them, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. 2:13) We are still in the flesh, but our new mind, through the Holy Spirit grows stronger, firmer, and deeply rooted in faith, for we have put on Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 2:5

To have come into this condition of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ is a wonderful blessing. It means that we have been reconciled to God, and that we are in harmony with him, who loved us first, and called us with this holy calling. Our peace or harmony with God began with our faith, and led to this condition of grace wherein we stand as sons of God, begotten of the Holy Spirit, and rejoicing in the hope of kingdom glory, honor and immortality.

FAITH LEADS TO PEACE

Our path to justification began with the first elements of our faith, when we first saw the Lord, although imperfectly. But then we were privileged to know more of him, and to grow in appreciation of having our feet set upon solid ground. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that

cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6) Faith is a real substance, a mental substance, which stimulates and clarifies the mind. This faith leads to the thought of having "peace [rest] with God." (Rom. 5:1) From the time that we first approached God, recognized that we were sinners, and gave our hearts to him, we began to have a measure of peace. This peace will continue with us as long as we strive to move in the right direction. That direction involves growing in knowledge and obedience, that we enter into this "peace of God, which passeth all understanding."—Phil. 4:7

We can have this peace, which grows with each onward step of obedience, and continues until we enter into the complete rest and peace with God that lies beyond the veil. Have we let the peace of God enter into our hearts, and into our new minds, into our memory, and are we striving to keep it dwelling there? This can be done through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. It must be so, for to do any less would not be pleasing to God.

OUR LOVE

And what can we say about love? When we hear the word love, what immediately comes into our mind? One word can be heard that can trigger in us a series of thoughts or memories associated with that word. When we think of love, does a scripture come into our mind? Several scriptures mention love, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16); "God is love." (I John 4:8,16); "Love is the fulfilling

of the law." (Rom. 13:10) "Perfect love casteth out fear."—I John 4:18

Our narrow way experience, and its resulting precious memories, can be likened to a tree. There is a beginning—a root, then a stem sprouts—it develops and grows. Later, branches are added, and it grows to maturity. We realize that, in the case of the consecrated footstep followers of our Lord, it must continue to be watered with the Truth, until, through the development of all of the graces of the Holy Spirit it reaches the mark of perfect love, and brings forth fruit.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." (Eph. 3:17,18) Love is the spirit of all who are truly members of the body of Christ. Love is a chief matter to be studied, appreciated, and practiced in our lives. Proper growth in knowledge, though, should keep pace with our growth in love. When knowledge serves its proper purpose, it brings us to the appreciation of the love that is of God.

The above verses speak of the importance of our understanding 'the breadth, and length, and depth, and height' of God's plan, and his love, and to have a full comprehension of it as we have been privileged to receive by his grace. It is through his Holy Word that we see the promises that are granted now to "them that believe," the "little flock." (Gal. 3:22; Luke 12:32) When proven faithful they shall have made their calling and election sure, and be esteemed worthy to share the throne and glory of the great overcomer, Jesus. This leads to the blessings

of all of the families of the earth through God's perfect law of love.—Gen 28:14

We must remember that all things started out with our Heavenly Father's love, and then included our Lord's love. "Oh God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: . . . Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. . . . When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." (Ps. 63:1-6) Our heart's desire is to show forth this same character and to demonstrate a love of the Truth, for "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4) We also desire to have brotherly love which leads us to perfect love.—Rom. 12:10

GIVING OUR ALL

Consider the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) It implies that our giving must be willing and voluntary. Paul was glad to know that the Father was working with him, as he expressed, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." (II Cor. 7:4) Our loving Heavenly Father desires that we are giving constantly for the good of others, as he gives to us from his storehouse of grace and truth. "God loveth a cheerful giver." (II Cor. 9:7) An example of this is found in "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." (I Thess. 1:3,4) Again, the words, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a

man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Our Lord spoke these words after he gave the commandment that we love 'one another as I have loved you.'

The laying down of our Lord's life was accomplished day by day, moment by moment, in healing the sick, in teaching and instructing his disciples. He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14) If we submit our wills completely to his will, he reckons us as 'friends.' We go on to grow and develop by following Jesus. It means that we walk in his paths, and strive to do as nearly as we are able what he would have us do each day, taking our lessons from what he did and the instructions he left—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) He also asked the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."—chap. 17:17

The Apostle John tells us, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:3-7) It appears that he wants us to commit these

things to our precious memories because of the great importance of these words.

Paul says, "I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, . . . Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." (Phil. 4:3,4) The church is the one whose names are written on heavenly scrolls, because they secured Divine favor, and have their names written in God's book of remembrance, his book of life. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—I John 3:2

OUR LORD'S MEMORY

What about the memory of the Lord? Our Lord's statement "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), serves to identify the man Christ Jesus with his previous condition as the Logos (#3056, *Strong's Bible Concordance*: Greek, the Word, the name of Jesus) before he was "made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) So it signifies and positively identifies Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, with the Logos, the firstborn of all Creation. Originally, he was on the spirit plane. Later, he lived and he died on the earthly plane. At his resurrection, he was made alive on the spirit plane, and then exalted far above angels, principalities, and powers. (Eph. 1:21) He is the same today although he has been received to the spirit plane. He says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Rev. 1:18) It was his knowledge of the heavenly things, his intimate and long acquaintance with the Father, which enabled him as a perfect man to overcome

the world, and present an acceptable sacrifice for our sins.

The memory of things past is still with our Lord. He has experienced existence in three different natures. The first was as a high order of spirit being as the first creation of God, the Logos (John 1:1); secondly, was as a human being (Heb. 5:9); and thirdly, was as the glorified Lord having the Divine nature. (Eph. 1:20,21) The life principle and identity of the Logos was transferred to a lower nature, the human, the man Jesus. As a man, his recollection of prehuman experiences was preserved. He could appreciate his former glory. Our Lord's memory was active at the age of twelve, when he was found questioning the teachings of the Jewish elders in the Temple. (Luke 2:46) This implies that, although he had remembrance of certain things, he was not born with the knowledge of all of his previous experiences. When, at the age of thirty, he consecrated himself to the Father, symbolized by his baptism in the river Jordan, he received this knowledge through the begetting of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord, in his prehuman condition as a spirit being, was not called Jesus. This name was given at his birth as a human being. He became Jesus Christ at his baptism. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. 53:11) He realized the full importance of this at his consecration, and finished doing so at his crucifixion.

What comfort to our minds, and memories, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) Jesus and the Father are in harmony, although not one in person, because Jesus always did the will of his Father. It

also shows that the unchangeableness on God's part is a guarantee that the blessings to be bestowed under his arrangements will be everlasting, unending blessings. God's attributes: his wisdom, justice, mercy, love, and power are the same today as they were in the beginning of Creation. Our Lord has promised to remember us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) This assurance is given to those who are called to the one hope, and one calling.

Memory appears to be a means of identification of our personality, of our character. Not many wise or noble are called according to the flesh. (I Cor. 1:26) "I thank thee, O Father, . . . because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25) Continuing from Matthew, chapter 11, "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." (vs. 29) These verses speak of those of a contrite heart who desire to be teachable, taught of God, and to learn his ways of truth. The Lord is seeking only the meek, the humble-minded, those who are willing to learn of him and to have their minds transformed and conformed to the pattern most pleasing to the Lord.

NONE RIGHTEOUS

None measure up to the glorious image of God, as first it was represented in father Adam. The Apostle Paul tells us, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10) All come short of God's standard, and need Divine mercy. We do also realize that those whom the Lord is calling are covered under his "robe of righteousness." In this manner, he covers our unwilling imperfections.—Isa. 61:10

We are told, "The memory of the just is blessed: . . . The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" (Prov. 10:7,11), and "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction." (vs. 17) Those who are just, keep in memory God's instructions, and use them to serve him and the cause of truth and righteousness. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath." (II Cor. 8:12) The Lord hath promised, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." (Isa. 26:3) The word 'stayed' has many definitions, but the one that appears most fitting is to remain through or during. It implies the ability to overcome or endure, that our minds are again being kept full of the precious promises of God. A mind full of his Word then causes us to ask if we are doing all that we can to have it stay there until this present life with its joys, trials, and experiences is over.

In the meantime, we can daily see how much our Father loves us. He gives us help with our remembering, as he did long ago when he gave us the rainbow covenant in Genesis 9:15, and the covenant that he made with Abraham, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."—Gen. 12:3

God gave us the lesson of the Passover of the children of Israel. (Exod. 12:8) The term Passover signifies to pass by or to spare from affliction, showing us that faith in the precious blood is the only ground of acceptance with God. We are then told as a basis for remembering the sacrifice of our Saviour concerning the Lord's Supper when he said, "This do in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) He wants us to remember the giving of his life, and at what great cost the redemption of the world from sin

and death was obtained. Our Lord also wants his followers to remember their own vow of consecration that should be renewed each day, and their share in putting their own sacrifice on the altar and keeping it there daily.

OUR COMMISSION

Let us bring this study to a close with a couple of scriptures that further point to the goal that each of us has, and the focus of our thoughts today. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." (II Pet. 3:1,2) He was referring to their work of encouraging, and being used fully in the Lord's service. This was reflected in the words, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."—Phil. 4:8

We should stir up each other's minds toward growth and development in good works. We are assisted in this endeavor by the provisions the Lord has made which give us the capacity to remember. Thus, we should be determined to do those things of spiritual importance, honest things that would edify the body members, and give praise and glory to God. "We should remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10), that this time of sorrow for the world will soon turn to unspeakable joy, and remember those going

through difficult trials and experiences. We should always make a point to pray for one another, and take advantage of opportunities we have for study, fellowship, and communion.

Strive always to develop your precious memories of God's love, of his blessings, of those who we have the privilege of walking with now as members of the body of Christ. Remember the wonderful prom-ises of God, and that he is a faithful Father who through his Son has vowed, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5) Keep the loving memories of those who have walked this narrow way before, and are no longer with us, near to your heart.

Let us continue to put God first in our lives, giving thanks for his providential care and overruling of all of our interests for our highest welfare. ■