

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume VI Number 1

New Years! Remember to Forget – and Don't Forget to Remember!

Editor's Note: This "MM" is an email sermon, the 1st of 2007 --73rd overall-- in a series we are sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message is a sermon I recently revised; it is based on pressing on in the New Year by forgetting the parts of the past that would hinder us. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and honor God. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, use it or components of it! May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

ARM QUICK FACT:

The Daughters of Ruth: ARM's Branch Ministry in Thailand

This aftercare home for girls just out of prison began in April of 2006. At last report, there were TEN girls in the new home. This is a fast growing ministry! Here is Boonlerd's last report:

This month we have industrial sewing machines at the house and we have started to train the children to sew hand bags. We receive the orders from the factory and there are also several ex-prisoners who are women who start their training with us, too.

The end of academic year for our children at the House is soon. Some of the children will finish their secondary education and will continue their classes in the college. What worries me is the budget for the school fees for them.

For the year 2007, there are 18 children who have applied to come to stay at our House and right now we are considering who we can accept. However, our problem is that we do not have enough space and our budget is so limited that I am afraid that we cannot take all of them.

Gifts of any size may be sent to ARM Daughters of Ruth, Rt. 5 Box 159, Salem, MO 65560.

New Years! Remember to Forget – and Don't Forget to Remember!

Philippians 3:1-15

**Just a line to say I'm living,
that I'm not among the dead,
Though I'm getting more forgetful
and mixed up in the head.
I got used to my arthritis,
to my dentures I'm resigned.**

**I can manage my bifocals,
but I sure do miss my mind.
For sometimes I can't remember
when I stand at the foot of the stair,
If I must go up for something
or have I just come down from there.
And before the fridge so often
my poor mind is filled with doubt.
Have I just put the food away or
have I come to take some out?
And there are times when it is dark
with my night cap on my head,
I don't know if I'm retiring, or
just getting out of bed.
So, if it's my turn to write you
there's no need getting sore,
I may think that I have written
and don't want to be a bore.
So, remember that I love you
and wish that you were near,
But now it's nearly mail time
so I must say goodbye, dear.
There I stand beside the mailbox
with a face so very red,
Instead of mailing you my letter,
I have opened it instead.**

We all have some problems with remembering everything we should – from where we last put our car keys to being properly aware of the date of our anniversary!

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: "Remember"-- in the sense it OUGHT to be done -- is found about 30 times! Even the word "forget" is sometimes used to challenge us to remember!

Heb 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (KJV)

Heb 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; (NAS)

James 1:24 for {once} he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. (NAS)

2 Pet 1:9 For he who lacks these {qualities} is blind {or} short-sighted, having forgotten {his} purification from his former sins. (NAS)

In the Old Testament God's wayward people were frequently described as those who had forgotten God:

Jeremiah 3:21 ... for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. (KJV)

Ezek 22:12 ... thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. (KJV)

So remembering is clearly a GOOD thing – and avoiding forgetfulness is also a good thing. Hence the second part of the title: 'Don't Forget to Remember!' So why the first recommendation in the title: 'Remember to Forget?'

For this simple reason: Remembering the WRONG things can be as harmful as forgetting the RIGHT THINGS! We have the Apostle Paul's example and testimony as evidence and instruction on the "proper art of forgetfulness!" Remember this verse:

Phil 3:13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of {it} yet; but one thing {I do}: forgetting what {lies} behind and reaching forward to what {lies} ahead, (NAS)

Reaching forward, growth, and progress – especially in our spiritual lives are important! Paul says that "forgetting precedes reaching the goal! Now let's get a fuller context by reading the first 15 verses of that chapter:

Phil 3:1-15

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;

3 for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,

9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;

(NAS)

We could do a year's worth of lessons on what ought to be REMEMBERED, but I want to share a brief study on the importance of forgetting -- and what WE SHOULD FORGET.

It's an appropriate time: New Year!

What had Paul forgotten? Two specific things are in this passage. One big item is found elsewhere in Paul's writings. Let's start with the one found in Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice (KJV)

I. FORGET PAST HURTS! Ephesians 4:31

Not only is living in the "pain of the past" pure misery, it leads to many sins. Paul mentions bitterness first. That's how we know he is talking about forgetting past hurts. We are embittered by our remembering how others have hurt us, let us down, failed to keep their promises. The injuries we remember are given free reign to CONTINUE TO DO US DAMAGE!

One day a visitor leaned on the old fence around a farm while he watched an old farmer plowing with a mule. After a while, the visitor said, "I don't like to tell you how to run your business, but you could save yourself a lot of work by saying, 'Gee' and 'Haw' to that mule instead of just tugging on those lines." The old farmer pulled a big handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face. Then he said, "Reckon you're right, but this animal kicked me five years ago and I ain't spoke to him since."

The moral of the story seems obvious: A grudge is harder on the one who holds it than the one it is held against. The Apostle Paul said that we are to forgive any man if we have a quarrel against him. Just like Christ forgave us, we are to forgive each other (Col. 3:13). Friend, if God and Christ can extend mercy to you for your sins, surely you can be merciful to those who offend you.

**If we fail to forgive, we are remembering that which ought to be forgotten!
Sometimes a little child shall lead them**

Two little boys had quarreled. But the next morning Johnny took his cap and headed for Bobby's house again. Surprised, an older member of the family said teasingly, "What! Going to play with him again? I thought you quarreled only last evening and were never going to have anything more to do with each other. Funny memory you have." Johnny looked a little sheepish, dug his toe into the carpet for a moment, then flashed a satisfied smile as he hurried away. "Oh! Bobby and me are good forgetters!"

When it comes to recalling our past hurts we should strive to let God help us be GOOD FORGETTERS!

II. FORGET PAST SIZZLES! Philipians 3:4-7

I'm using "sizzles" for past successes on purpose – you'll understand better as we get to point three. Paul catalogs his reasons to boast in these four verses:

4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

These sizzles are described by Paul as FLESHLY CONFIDENCE or PRIDE IN OUR EARTHLY STATUS. They breakdown into two categories:

1. HIS BIOLOGICAL/RELIGIOUS HERITAGE. V. 5

Paul seeks to forget his former pride in saying: "Look what family I'm from! I'm better than you!" He details his biological pedigree:

VS 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews

Are you proud you are from the "USA?" Are you patriotic? Good. But are you at the point of thinking you are more important than others from other lands? Are you proud you are from State you're from? Pride can come from one's surname, place of birth, social status, etc. The point is that we must forget our pride in any advantages we received from our parents and upbringing. We are all sinners in need of the blood of Christ!

2. HE THEN MOVES TO HIS LEGALISTIC OR RITUALISTIC OBEDIENCE. V. 6, 7

This sub point has more to do with PERFORMANCE than PEDIGREE. Having established that he had always considered his biological heritage as superior in pleasing God, he admits that he formerly had much confidence in his PERFORMANCE IN HIS KEEPING OF THE LAW. Look at the last phrase in verse five and verse 6:

VS 5e (A) as to the Law, a Pharisee;

VS 6 (B) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;

(C) as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

He had thought of himself as 'SIZZLING' in obedience. After all, he had been Pharisaical in his precise keeping of the Law of Moses! But hear his Christian attitude about previous self-righteousness:

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,

9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (NAS)

But we must quickly mention one more area in which to be forgetful:

III. FORGET PAST FIZZLES! Philippians 3:12-15

12 Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;

Could Paul have been thinking of his past sins? I think so – he mentioned his persecution of the church in verse six. It was a part of the description of his devotion to Judaism. Yet it also represents the mistakes he made in attacking Christ's church, imprisoning Christians, and killing the saints.

After all, this is the man who held the garments of those who stoned Stephen and then proceeded to wage a bloodthirsty war upon the followers of Jesus Christ! He himself said in 1 Tim 1:15:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (KJV)

Did his past FIZZLES shackle him and make him barren? By no means! Paul admitted his sin, drew even closer to Christ, and "pressed on!"

Satan will throw up our mistakes and sins as obstacles to our joy and confidence in serving Christ. We can't stop serving and hoping in Christ – consider this little

anecdote about Martin Luther:

Luther once said: "Once upon a time the devil said to me, 'Martin Luther, you are a great sinner, and you will be damned!'

'Stop! Stop!' said I; 'one thing at a time. I am a great sinner, it is true, though you have not right to tell me of it. I confess it. What next?'

'Therefore you will be damned.'

'That is not good reasoning. It is true I am a great sinner, but it is written, Jesus Christ came to save sinners; therefore I shall be saved! Now go your way.'

So I cut the devil off with his own sword, and he went away mourning because he could not cast me down by calling me a sinner."

How's your forgetfulness? Always remember God and his Word. ALLOW HIM TO HELP YOU PRESS ON TO THE GOAL BY FORGETTING YOUR HURTS, SIZZLES, FIZZLES!

"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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Check out our web sites: www.arm.org www.abarc.org www.raphahouse.org www.daughtersofruth.org

**In 2005, 127 ABA Bible courses was mailed from ARM every day!
In 2005, an ABA Bible course was mailed from ARM to a prisoner EVERY 11.3 minutes!**
