



# PREACHING AS REMINDING

*Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness*



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FOREWORD BY JOHN ORTBERG



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## GOD REMEMBERS (AND FORGETS)

*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

LUKE 23:42

*Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?*

*Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.*

*Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*

ISAIAH 49:15-16



MEMORY IS ONE OF THE principle themes of *The Silver Chair*, the fourth book in C. S. Lewis's Narnia series.<sup>1</sup> In it Lewis tells the tale of Jill and Eustace who undertake a mission from Aslan to free Prince Rilian, who is held captive by the evil queen of Underland, a subterranean world of caves and shadows. The queen has Rilian under a spell so that he does not remember Overworld, the land of Narnia, the sun, or Aslan himself. But every night Rilian has a moment of lucidity when the spell fades and memories flash. During those moments—his

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<sup>1</sup>C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (New York: Macmillan, 1953). This portion of the story is found on pages 151-59.

only moments of true sanity—the queen binds him to the silver chair so that his memories torment him but he cannot act on them.

One night the brave trio of Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum the Marsh-wiggle manage to free the prince from the chair before the spell takes hold again. Rilian sees clearly and longs to return to Overworld to feel again the bracing air of Narnia, but the queen has more tricks up her sleeve. She befuddles the four subjects of Aslan by throwing green powder on a fire, producing “a sweet and drowsy smell.” Thrumming hypnotically on a mandolin, she coos, “Narnia? Narnia? I have often heard your Lordship utter that name in your ravings. Dear Prince, you are very sick. There is no land called Narnia.”

Puddleglum and the others gamely argue with her: they have been in Narnia! They have seen it! She counters, “Tell me, I pray you, where that country is?” The only response the muddled Marsh-wiggle can offer is, “Up there, I don’t know exactly where.”

“Is there a country up among the stones and mortar of the roof?” the queen purrs.

“I’ve seen the sky full of stars,” the stout Marsh-wiggle contends. “I’ve seen the sun coming up out of the sea of a morning and sinking behind the mountains at night. And I’ve seen him up in the midday sky when I couldn’t look at him for brightness.”

This rouses the others. How could they have forgotten? Of course! They had all seen the sun.

The queen feels the tide of the argument turning against her but explains that the “sun” is merely a projection of Underworld’s “lamp”: “Your sun is a dream, and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp.”

She says the same of Aslan. The so-called lion is like a huge cat, nothing more. Thrumming her instrument, she states, “You can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world, this world of mine, which is the only world.”

The queen has regained the upper hand and is about to declare victory, but suddenly, gathering all his strength, Puddleglum stamps out the fire and rouses his memories. They are so strong that even if

those things were made up—trees, grass, sun, moon, stars, and Aslan himself—then the “made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones.”

“I’m going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn’t any Narnia,” he declares.

The children and the prince snap out of the spell—“Hurrah! Good old Puddleglum!”—and overthrow the queen.

That’s what memory can do. It makes the past present and charts a course for the future.

### MEMORY IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible, “remembering” is more than mental recall. It involves emotion and volition as well as cognition.<sup>2</sup> It not only touches the past; it also articulates with the present and the future, helping a person connect previously acquired wisdom to current and future decisions. In the words of Old Testament scholar Robert Cosand, “Remembrance is an understanding of the reality of the past in such a way that the events of the past become a force in the present, producing some activity of will or of body or both.”<sup>3</sup> Bruce Waltke says simply, “Remembrance equals participation.”<sup>4</sup> When God remembers, he blesses. His mind, emotions, and actions favor the object of his attention. Or phrased in a more Hebraic way, his face is toward us, his eye is on us, and his hand is with us.

That’s what we hear when the thief on the cross asks the Lord to remember him (Lk 23:42). He means, of course, “Please extend your grace to me in the hour of death and especially in the hour following death.” We’ve lost much of this rich connotation of the word “remember” in modern English, but even today we hear an echo of the

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<sup>2</sup>Edward P. Blair, “An Appeal to Remembrance: The Memory Motif in Deuteronomy,” *Interpretation* 15 (1961): 43.

<sup>3</sup>J. Robert Cosand, “The Theology of Remembrance in the Cultus of Israel” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995), 293.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 504. Waltke is quoting Brevard S. Childs, who has written a thorough study of memory in *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 37 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1962).

biblical emphasis when the child at the party sees the host passing out treats. Bobbing in her seat and waving her hand, she pleads, “Remember me!” Look on me with favor. Similarly, we say, “The company always remembers its employees at Christmas.”

Not only does memory in the Bible equal participation and blessing, it also “re-members” disconnected things. At times this life seems inchoate, a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing, but reminders of God’s power in the past, his presence in the present, and his promises for the future help God’s children believe in the unseen hand that guides the affairs of their lives. Memory reunites us mentally, emotionally, and volitionally to the God who watches over us.

Even though our modern concept of memory is thinner than the biblical concept, our ceremonies and monuments maintain the robust sense. Perhaps you’ve been to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, descending along its two walls sunk into the ground. As of May 2014, 58,300 names were etched into the reflective black rock. Perhaps you have found the experience, as I have, to be somber and sobering. Cognitive recall of the past is brought into the present so that the visitor participates vicariously in the tragedy of the war.

If you visit Kings Domain Park in Melbourne, Australia, you may have a similar experience at the Shrine of Remembrance. It commemorates soldiers from the state of Victoria who died in World War I. Paving stones outside the shrine state, “We will remember them,” and one of the interior walls bears this exhortation: “Let all men know that this is holy ground. This shrine, established in the hearts of men as on the solid earth, commemorates a people’s fortitude and sacrifice. Ye therefore that come after, give remembrance.” In the center of the shrine is the Stone of Remembrance on which is inscribed, “Greater love hath no man,” and on November 11 at 11 a.m. (Remembrance Day), the sun shines through a small aperture in the roof to illumine the word “love.”

Is it worth the time and expense to build and maintain those memorials and the thousands of others like them around the world? We

believe it is. The Pearl Harbor Memorial in Honolulu, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, Virginia, the Kigali Genocide Memorial, and the site of the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving at Plimoth Plantation, Massachusetts, give testimony to our conviction that the past should not be allowed to fade from consciousness. To ensure that this does not happen we need reminders.

Perhaps the most sobering of all memorials in the United States is the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. When you enter you are given a "passport" that presents brief biographical facts about an actual Holocaust victim, and you then walk through the museum, which is laid out chronologically, noting what happened to your character each year. The museum is intended to help visitors remember the past through more than simple cognition. It creates a vicarious experience. When I visited the museum I received the passport of a cobbler in Warsaw in 1936. I first experienced the cobbler's joys of family and community, but then in 1939 the story turned dark as we were walled into the ghetto. Eventually the story reached its nadir when we were sent to Buchenwald in the early forties. Nothing is known about the cobbler after that.

Why build such a museum? Is it to lament the past? Yes. Is it to make the abstract concrete? Yes. But the primary purpose is to keep memory alive, honoring the dead and warning the living. After the Battle of Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln dedicated another memorial with these words: "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Memorials cause us to look back but also to look forward.

#### BIBLICAL TERMS FOR "REMEMBER"

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *zakar* is the primary term for "remember." It is used more than two hundred times in various forms and, as we have seen, rarely means simple mental recall. The same is true of the *mimnēskō* word group in the New Testament. It is used

seventy-four times, appearing in every book except 1 Timothy, 1 Peter, and 1 and 2 John. Both *zakar* and *mimnēsko* demonstrate that memory is a whole-person activity. Using Brevard Childs's term, biblical memory is "actualization."<sup>5</sup>

### MEMORY IN THE BIBLE IS A WHOLE-PERSON ACTIVITY

The following verses indicate that in the Bible memory is more than cognitive recall. It is a whole-person activity that includes the mind, emotions, and will.

**Exodus 20:8.** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." This means, of course, that Israel was to sanctify the Sabbath by taking action—worshiping and resting.

**Genesis 40–41.** While in jail, Joseph blesses the cupbearer by interpreting his dream. He asks the cupbearer to remember him before Pharaoh once he is freed, but the "chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Gen 40:23). Later the cupbearer realizes his mistake and speaks favorably of Joseph to Pharaoh (Gen 41:9).

**Deuteronomy 15:15.** Israel is to remember the days of their slavery in Egypt as a motive for freeing their own slaves every six years.

**Joshua 1:13, 16–17.** As the nation of Israel stands at the Jordan, poised to enter the Promised Land, Joshua urges them, "Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.' . . . And they answered Joshua, 'All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.'"

**Galatians 2:10.** "Remember the poor."

**Colossians 4:18.** "Remember my chains."

<sup>5</sup>Childs, *Memory and Tradition*, 82. Similarly, Robert Cosand states, "Remembrance produces activity. If one remembers one's sin, then shame and repentance are the results. If one remembers God, then praise or obedience results. When God remembers sin, He punishes it. When He remembers a person, His grace is bestowed on that person. When He remembers His covenant with Abraham, He acts in accordance with what He promised and grants His favor to Israel." Cosand, "Theology of Remembrance," 112.



**Hebrews 13:3.** “Remember those who are in prison.”

**Hebrews 13:7.** “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

**Revelation 2:5.** “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”

**Revelation 3:3.** “Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.”

The character of *zakar* can be seen by the company it keeps, the synonyms that nuance it. Some of the synonyms used regularly are “keep” (or “guard”), “listen” (or “obey”), and “show favor.” Psalm 103:17-18 states that the Lord’s steadfast love is upon “those who fear him . . . to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.” Likewise, the festival of Purim “should be remembered and kept throughout every generation” (Esther 9:28).

Four synonyms cluster in one passage, Exodus 2:24-25: “God *heard* their groaning, and God *remembered* his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God *saw* the people of Israel—and God *knew*.”<sup>6</sup> Theologically we understand that God’s memory cannot be jarred; rather, the author of Exodus uses the cluster of synonyms to speak of God’s faithfulness, omniscience, and tender regard for the enslaved children of Israel. The terms beautifully depict divine cognition, emotion, and volition—God’s “whole person” response—on behalf of his people. That was the encouragement the original readers of Exodus needed, a reminder that God is faithful to his covenant.

The disciples would need similar encouragement after Jesus departed this earth. Jesus implies that they would feel abandoned like orphans (Jn 14:18), so he comforts them with these words: “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will . . . bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you” (Jn 14:26-27). The Spirit’s ministry of remembrance brings peace as it assures troubled hearts that God has not forsaken them.

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<sup>6</sup>Emphasis added.

The opposite of remembering, of course, is forgetting, and this term also implies more than lack of mental recall. Forgetting is parallel to “forsaking” and “rejecting.” Isaiah 49:14 states, “The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” Similarly, Hosea 4:6-7 states, “Because you have rejected knowledge, . . . And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.”

To forget God means to disobey the commandments and worship other gods: “Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments . . . . If you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them . . . you shall surely perish” (Deut 8:11, 19). Judges 3:7 shows that the warning of Deuteronomy came true: “The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.”

Conversely, the one who does not forget God fears him, delights in his statutes and does not stray from his precepts:

I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word. (Ps 119:16)

I do not forget your law. . . .  
I do not stray from your precepts. (Psalm 119:109-110)

In the Bible, emotion and volition link arms with cognition as memory brings the past into the present with compelling power, producing appropriate behavior.

## GOD REMEMBERS

“What is man that you are mindful of him?” (Ps 8:4). The word for “mindful” in this verse is the same term we have been exploring—*zakar*. Here, to be mindful is to remember. The psalmist asks this because even though humans are crowned with glory and honor, we are also as insubstantial as a wind that passes (Ps 78:39), mist that vanishes (Jas 4:14), and grass that withers (Ps 90:5-6). God remembers that we are only dust (Ps 103:14) and we would do well to remember also.

The Trappist monks certainly do. Known for their austere lifestyle, these brothers have a specific discipline regarding burial. When one of the monks dies, the rest of the order places his body in a newly dug grave, and immediately after the interment they trace the dimensions of a new grave, the resting place of the next brother who will die, whoever he may be. In this way they remind themselves of their own mortality and thus gain wisdom for living.

Psalms 56 contains a poignant image of how God remembers our low estate. When David was being pursued by the Philistines, he lamented that “man tramples on me” (Ps 56:1), “all their thoughts are against me for evil” (Ps 56:5), and “they lurk; they watch my steps,” waiting for a chance to capture him (Ps 56:6). The anxiety and stress kept David awake at night and provoked many tears, and in all those fitful, wakeful hours, God was present:

You have kept count of my tossings;  
put my tears in your bottle.  
Are they not in your book? (Ps 56:8)

In the ancient world people sometimes collected and kept their tears in a small bottle as a memorial of their grief. God so identifies with his people that he puts our tears into his bottle and writes them in his book. When the Heavenly Father remembers, he answers prayer (Gen 30:22), blesses (Ps 115:12-13), saves us from our enemies (Num 10:9), protects (Gen 19:29), and rescues (Ps 136:23-24).

God’s tender regard for his children arises in part because of the incarnation. Made in the likeness of men, God tabernacled among us, and as the King James Version says, he is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). Not only did he condescend to become human, he also lowered himself by taking the form of a servant. Born in a stable, growing up with the indignities of poverty and oppression, maligned for doing good, and dying the death of a slave, Jesus knows our troubles.

God remembers all people, as he declared to Noah with the sign of the rainbow (Gen 8:1; 9:15-16), but he particularly remembers the subjects of the covenant. When God solemnly obligates himself with a

vow, he never forgets. In a world of spin and hype, the Christian rests on the assurance that God's yes is yes and his no is no. He is true to his word spoken to Abraham and his descendants: "I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land" (Lev 26:42). The promise made to Abraham still stands: "I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. . . . In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:2-3).

That promise has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the offspring of Abraham, so that now all who believe in Christ are the spiritual offspring of the patriarch. Zechariah articulates that confidence at the birth of his son, John the Baptist: he does not forget "to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham" (Lk 1:72-73).

God has blessed all the families of the world by sending his Son—his only Son, the Son whom he loves—as the sacrifice for sins. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus instituted a new covenant with his own blood, the fulfillment of the old covenant that had been ratified with the blood of circumcision and animal sacrifices. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins, but when Jesus offered his own body as a single sacrifice for the sins of humanity, once for all, he sat down at the right hand of God, and now he remembers our sins and lawless deeds no more (Heb 10:11-17).

God's remembrance is one of the towering peaks in the theological Himalayas, which also include his grace, majesty, and power. Doxology is the appropriate response, lifting our hands and voices in response to his promise "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5). The Greek text of this verse contains five negative particles, cumbersome to render into English, but soul-enriching nevertheless: "Never will I leave you—no, never—no! Nor forsake you." The hymn "How Firm a Foundation" recreates that purposeful redundancy:

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!<sup>7</sup>

An old hymn by James Montgomery is sometimes sung on Maundy Thursday. Through five stanzas it exhorts worshipers to remember God—"I will remember Thee," "I must remember Thee," and so forth. But the last verse provides a reality check, for no matter how well we remember God, we falter. Thus, the hymn concludes:

And when these failing lips grow dumb  
And mind and memory flee,  
When Thou shalt in Thy kingdom come,  
Jesus, remember me.<sup>8</sup>

The believer's hope rests in the Savior's memory.

When we are reminded of God's remembrance, we respond in doxology, but we also take warning because at times God's recollection means judgment. This is true in a general sense when God's wrath is poured out on all sinners (Rom 1:18, 28; 2:1-5), and it is true in a specific sense with the symbolic city of Babylon in the book of Revelation: "God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath" because "her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Rev 16:19; 18:5).

While sinners outside of the covenant rightly quake lest they fall into the hands of an angry God, his judgment on children in the covenant should be thought of as discipline, not retribution. Punishment is for training so that God's people will trust and obey, the only way to be happy in the Lord. As the author of Hebrews states, quoting Proverbs 3,

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.  
The Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives. (Heb 12:5-6)

<sup>7</sup>Author unknown, "How Firm a Foundation," 1787. Commonly attributed to Robert Keene.

<sup>8</sup>James Montgomery, "According to Thy Gracious Word," 1825.

This may be a subtle difference—hating the sin but loving the sinner—but it is a subtlety that gives heart. God does not condemn his subjects who slip in their obedience. Rather, he condemns their sin by nailing it to the cross, and then he trains disciples in right living.

God disciplines his children because a covenant is a solemn agreement between a sovereign and his people. The king agrees to provide for the citizens and they agree to obey his laws. The king of heaven initiated the covenant unilaterally, sovereignly, and graciously, and once the covenant is sealed with blood and vows, the subjects must fulfill their duties. One of the minister's primary responsibilities is reminding the faith family of God's grace extended in Jesus—the new covenant—and our fitting response of obedience. Like the king's remembrancer who put the barons in mind of their duties to the crown, the Lord's remembrancers remind the covenant people of their duty to love God and neighbor.

#### WE ASK GOD TO REMEMBER

Because God is true to his word, it is perfectly natural for his children to cry out when they suffer, "Remember me!" and "Remember us!" When humiliated before the Philistines, Samson prays, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines" (Judg 16:28). When pleading for mercy, Job asks God to "remember that my life is a breath" (Job 7:7). Similarly, the author of Lamentations surveys his besieged city and cries out, "Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace!" (Lam 5:1).

The greatest repository in the Bible for this kind of prayer is the psalms of lament, especially the imprecatory psalms. For example, Ethan, the author of Psalm 89, prays, "Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked" (Ps 89:50). Similarly, Asaph beseeches God, "Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!" (Ps 74:22). Over and over the poets ask God to remember his suffering people.

"Remember me; remember us!" achieves its shrillest pitch in the imprecatory psalms, but that same prayer is also naturally breathed

out in supplication. Perhaps you recall Lancelot Andrewes from the introduction of this book, the man who coined the phrase “the Lord’s remembrancers.” Andrewes was a brilliant scholar, supervising much of the translation of the King James Version of the Bible, and he was also a deeply devout man. We can learn much from the prayers he used for his private devotions. Each set of daily prayers is permeated with Scripture. The following passage is a portion of his intercession for the fourth day, in which, like the psalmists, he asks God to remember . . . remember . . . remember:

Remember to crown the year with Thy goodness; for the eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season.

Remember Thy holy Church, from one end of the earth to the other; and establish her unto the end of the world.

Remember every Christian soul in affliction, distress, and trial,

Moreover, Lord, remember graciously our holy fathers, the honourable presbytery, and all the clergy, rightly dividing the word of truth

Those who are on trial, in mines, in exile, in galleys, in whatever affliction, necessity, and emergency, remember, O God.

Those of whom we have not made mention, through ignorance, forgetfulness, or number of names, do Thou Thyself remember, O God, Thou who knowest each man and his petition, each house, and its need.<sup>9</sup>

A theology of memory shows us that the God of the covenant is true to his word and to his children, so we are bold, like Lancelot Andrewes, to ask him to remember us.

## GOD FORGETS

Like remembering, forgetting is a whole-person activity of mind, will, and emotion. For ancient believers, being remembered by God, family, and community was tantamount to possessing honor and identity. Thus Nehemiah prayed, “Remember for my good, O my God, all that

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<sup>9</sup>Lancelot Andrewes, *Lancelot Andrewes and His Private Devotions*, trans. Alexander Whyte (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 99-103.

I have done for this people” (Neh 5:19), and “Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God” (Neh 13:14; see also Neh 13:22, 31). Conversely, God’s forgetting means he judges. Our salvation, hope, identity, and even our very existence are possible only because God remembers us, so when he forgets, life sputters and ceases.

One way the Bible refers to being remembered is to say a person’s “name” lives on because one’s “name” is a shorthand way to denote the whole of a person’s essence. Absalom worried that he would be forgotten because he had “no son to keep [his] name in remembrance,” so he built a pillar and modestly named it “Absalom’s monument” (2 Sam 18:18). Conversely, the Lord assures eunuchs in the covenant that God will give them “a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off” (Is 56:5).

Therefore, because existence and honor are linked to being remembered, the possibility that one’s name might be forgotten appears in Scripture as a severe menace. The phrases “May his name not be remembered” and “May his memory be blotted out” were ways to curse an enemy (see Job 18:17; Ps 9:5-6; 83:4; 109:14; Prov 10:7; Jer 11:19). The failure to be remembered is a dire punishment from God, synonymous with obliteration (see Ex 17:14; Deut 32:26; Is 26:14; Eccles 9:5).

God does not forget his children, but he does forget their sins: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Is 1:18). Of course, on one level it is impossible for God to forget anything. But in keeping with what we have seen about remembering and forgetting, we understand that when the Bible says he forgets our sins, it means he does not act toward us on the basis of those sins. They no longer bear on our relationship. In Edward Blair’s words, “To forget something . . . is to let the past fall out of dynamic, conditioning relation to the present.”<sup>10</sup> The story of Shimei and David is an analogy of God’s forgetting our sins: when Shimei begs King David not to

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<sup>10</sup>Blair, “Appeal to Remembrance,” 44.



remember his insults (2 Sam. 19:19), he does not expect the king to mentally jettison them but rather to volitionally jettison them—that is, to not act toward Shimei in accord with the disloyal deed.

Because God forgets our sins, we should too, not with cavalier forgetfulness that fails to recognize the pit from which we were drawn but with buoyant forgetfulness that is no longer haunted by past rebellion or future retribution. Such buoyancy is possible because our hope is in Christ: “Remember Jesus Christ. . . . If we have died with him, we will also live with him” (2 Tim 2:8-11).

Alluding to Isaiah 49:16 (“Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands”), Charles Wesley wrote:

Arise, my soul, arise; shake off thy guilty fears;  
The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears:  
Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on His hands.<sup>11</sup>

As practical theology, preaching as reminding is built on theology proper—the character and actions of God. Because he remembers his covenant and forgets the sins of his children, promising never to leave or forsake them, ministers take their stance as the Lord’s remembrancers, reminding the baptized that nothing shall separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. But preaching as reminding is built on a second foundation also, one related to human nature: we are prone to forget.

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<sup>11</sup>Charles Wesley, “Arise, My Soul, Arise,” 1742.

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