

WEEK TWENTY-FOUR  
DAY TWO

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits,  
Psalm 103:2

Bless	בָּרַךְ <i>barak</i>	– to kneel, bless, or be blessed
the Lord,	יְהוָה <i>Yĕhovah</i>	– the self-Existent or Eternal; Jewish national name of God —Jehovah, the Lord
O my soul	נַפְשׁ <i>nephesh</i>	– a breathing creature, soul
and forget	שָׁכַח <i>shakach</i>	–to mislay, i.e. to be oblivious of, from want of memory or attention; forget.
not	אֵל <i>'al</i>	– (a negative particle) not
all	כֹּל <i>kol</i>	– all, the whole, altogether
his benefits	גְּמוּלָה <i>gĕmuwl</i>	– treatment, dealing, benefit, that which he hath given

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We are a forgetful people, and God knows this. Trace the trail of the Bible's continual theme: Fear, know, love, and serve the LORD (Dt. 10:12-13), and you will live. How often does God reiterate that truth? Often. Consider the psalms recounting God's deliverance of His people and the blessing of walking in His ways (Ps. 78, 89, 105, 106, and 107). Though the Israelites knew the stories of God's deliverance and their call to follow Him, the LORD frequently reminded them of His goodness and holiness, charging His people to recount His characteristics and acts to themselves and to their neighbors.

Perhaps our main problem is not that we forget but what we forget. Since we are human and therefore finite, we retain limited amounts of information at a time, even with the marvelous capacity of the mind. God commands us to forget specific memories, situations, and expectations: "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). The LORD Himself – He with no limits – chooses to "forget": "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:34).

So how do we ensure that we remember what we should remember and forget what we should forget? Numbers 15:37-41 offers a clue. In this passage, God instructs the Israelites to craft tassels on the corners of their garments. Why? "And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God." The tassel was a focusing tool: a visual reminder to the Israelites of Whose they were. We, too, can create our own "tassels" – our own Ebenezers to remind us of Who God is and what He has done (1 Sam. 7:12). Whether it be a stone, a painting, a plaque, or some other memento, surrounding ourselves with special reminders of times that God has been faithful is a practical and powerful way to keep the Lord always before us (Ps. 16:8).

However, the best way to remember rightly is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Keep the Word before, within, and around you through Scripture reading and meditating – that is the Lord's commandment. What you most value and seek is what you remember. Should we not make that the Word of God?

~Elisabeth Hooker

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DAY FOUR

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When people ask what my earliest memory is, I often tell them about a surgery I had when I was three years old. I think the reason why I remember something from such a young age is because my memories are often directly tied to a strong emotional response, probably in part because I'm a woman (can I get an amen?). If I'm elated, livid, terrified, or, more often, a combination of those, I will remember something in great detail.

When I was three years old, I had two reconstructive surgeries on my kidneys, and it was traumatic. Fear, confusion, and pain—all of these flooded my three-year-old heart, and I have a vivid memory of lying on a hospital bed, staring up at some holographic stickers someone had put on the plastic bar above my head, and I was screaming-crying in pain. My mom stood to my right, gripping my hand, trying to comfort me, tears streaming down her own face.

After the second surgery, the procedure was successful, but the pain, fear, and confusion had carved a solid memory in my brain. To this day, almost 26 years later, I can still describe to you what the pain felt like, what colors the stickers were, how distressed I was to see my mother crying.

I think about children who were victims of abuse as they were growing up and the scars that the fear and pain left upon their hearts... and the enemy laughs.

But God...

I looked up the word "benefit" in the dictionary, and it means "something advantageous or good." What God gives is advantageous and good for us. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lays it out plainly: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11, ESV).

It's simple—our Father, the God of heaven, gives good gifts. He gives them, and sometimes we don't even see them, recognize them, or understand them, much less thank Him for them. But what David is calling upon his own soul to do—and, therefore, each of our own souls—is to remember the good gifts, the things in our lives that are advantageous or good.

David is writing this after he's been caught in adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of another man. He is broken, staring his sin in the face, overwhelmed at the mercy that the Lord has extended to him, and he chooses to praise God. He chooses to remember the good gifts, the mercy, love, grace, and forgiveness poured out upon him.

May we, too, remember the good gifts. Begin with my soul, Lord.

~ Amber Wilson

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DAY FIVE

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I'm a forgetful person. I've forgotten my keys, my wallet, my jacket, my purse, my water bottle...you name it, I've accidentally left it somewhere when I was supposed to carry it with me. I even forget plans to meet someone—when I don't write them down—which is not only frustrating to me but also to people with whom I've made those plans. It produces anxiety in me and causes my friends to doubt if they really are important to me. All in all, forgetfulness produces more harm than I care to mention. And we all suffer from it.

I don't care if you're the most Type-A, by-the-book woman on the face of the planet, you have forgotten something, and it has left you anxious and uncertain. You have forgotten what the Lord has done for you. Maybe not at this very moment, but I guarantee that you have at some point, and you will continue to. It's a struggle that we, as beings of limited mental capacity, will never be free from. Why do you think David—the famed “man after God's own heart”—commands his soul to praise (or bless) Yahweh, the self-Existent, Eternal, and personal God? Because his soul has not been adoring the Lord as it should, with the bended knees of humble gratitude. Why do you think that he commands his soul not to forget God's benefits? Because his soul has forgotten what the Lord has done. He is calling upon himself to never forget the continual favor the Lord has shown him. Just as we all have done. Just as we all continue to do.

It's interesting that the primitive root of the Hebrew word for “forget” means not only “to mislay” but also “be oblivious of.” So even if we aren't forgetting His past actions on our behalf, odds are we're probably oblivious to His acting in our current situations. We limit our God to the past, behaving as if He is not outside of time and space. Beloved, our God is Living and thus our God is active. Even now, when everything seems to have stagnated and you're yearning for something to change. Even now, when you're in the middle of battling a darkness so complete it just might swallow you whole. Even now, when everything seems to be going according to plan and you feel as if life couldn't get much better—He is acting. Now, you've probably noticed that I've not mentioned the word “benefits” yet. That was intentional. In original Hebrew, the word for “benefit” means “treatment, i.e., an act” a definition which is extremely significant to this passage. David did not say “forget not all His blessings,” or “forget not all His gifts to you,” but “forget not all His actions,” never specifying if those actions are “good” or “bad.” I believe that the Psalmist is implying that all the Lord's actions, whether good or bad in the eyes of man, are benefits.

It's a hard pill to swallow; even David knew that. Which is why he follows this verse with a veritable laundry list of the attributes of God, giving his readers reason after reason after reason to trust in His sovereign will. And all these reasons are in present tense, further proof that our Lord is continually at work—even when we forget He's there. But why must we remember what He has done for us? He did it! Why rehash the past? Because it reminds us that we did not get where we are today through our own talent and cunning. It reminds us of our weaknesses yet testifies to His strength. It reminds us that the One who has been faithful

before will be faithful again. If you are anxious, if you are troubled and heavy-hearted as I have been, join me in commanding your soul to praise the Lord and remember. Remember when the Lord brought you safely through a seemingly endless trial. Remember when the Lord provided abundantly when you least suspected it. Remember when He met your needs by showering you with His love. In short, remember Whose you are. You belong to the Living God who split the sea, stopped the sun in the sky, and brought the dead back to life. He is strong enough to bring you safely home. Oh bless the Lord, my flighty soul, and forget not all of His faithful deeds.

~ Joanna Toso

