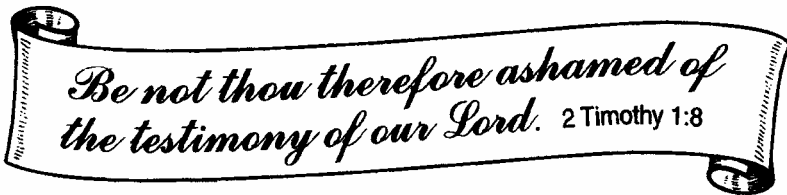


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Editorial.

Appreciating the Past; Preparing for the Future

Stepping over the threshold of the New Year reminds us that time is quickly passing. How soon the present becomes the past and the future, the present! How brief the interlude between the rise of one generation and that of the next!

The cliché "The only lesson that has been learned from history is that nothing has been learned from history" is more intriguing than accurate. We do consider the past and draw conclusions from it. These gleanings from history do influence our present and, consequently, our future decisions. The profitability of these gleanings, however, is directly related to the attitudes that we have toward history. The question is not, "Do we learn from history?" but, "Are we open to the spiritually beneficial lessons that history offers?" and, "Are we applying those lessons practically?"

What attitudes toward the past will detract from drawing conclusions that spur spiritual growth?

Being satisfied as long as the present generation remains Scriptural. When King Hezekiah was

reproved and told that all his wealth and even his posterity would be taken to Babylon, he responded, "Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" (2 Kings 20:19).

Our spiritual vision needs to include the spiritual well-being of our posterity. We need to build convictions and promote practices that will endure. If we draw our lines of separation too closely to the world, we are preparing the way for the next generation to drift into the world. If, for example, our sisters' hair arrangements do not express a spirit of meekness and sobriety, the next generation will choose more worldly hairstyles that will undermine conviction for the veiling itself.

Glorifying the past and disparaging the present. Solomon warned, "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" (Ecclesiastes 7:10).

A nostalgic appreciation for the past does not prepare us for the future because it fails to inspire faithfulness in present and future generations. We should therefore be cautious about supporting history-related meetings that bring together, through the bond of

common heritage, those who vary greatly in their practice. Appreciating the faithful of the past is beneficial as it inspires us to appreciate faithfulness today. God calls each generation to stand for the truth and provides continuing resources for continued steadfastness. Christ will find a pure bride on earth when He returns, and we today have the privilege to be a part of that bride.

Excusing current inconsistencies because of the failures of the past.

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2). God condemned the people of Judah for blaming their present woes on their fathers' failures. He emphasized personal accountability, calling for personal repentance.

Inconsistency in the past never justifies present inconsistency. Often, these apparent weaknesses were not fully approved by the faithful or did not carry the image that they do today. When any weaknesses were tolerated over a period of time, they were detrimental to maintaining separation. Our attitude toward inconsistency, whether old or new, needs to be to seek to correct the issue in question.

What attitude toward the past will encourage drawing conclusions that spur spiritual growth?

Seeking for the old, time-proven

path and walking in it. 'Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). This plea for the old paths was a call for wayward Judah to return to her former faithfulness.

History is valuable as we appreciate the old ways that have proven to be safe. Our appreciation or lack of appreciation for the proven ways will be reproduced in the rising generation. Those of past generations who viewed nonconformity as "mere cultural baggage" and insisted that it detracted from the effectiveness of the Gospel message almost inevitably reproduced worldliness. But those who viewed nonconformity as an inherent part of the Gospel message have been far more successful in passing on the faith.

History has little value unless we apply its lessons to our lives. As we commit ourselves to walking in the way that has proven safe, we will profit from its lessons. As we live the present and face the future from this perspective, we are preparing for a glorious future when "time shall be no more."

—GEA



The Wonder of Memory.

Have you ever thanked the Lord

for the gift of memory? Hopefully we need not observe the tragic loss of memory in another or the failure of our own in order to stir our sense of wonder at this gift.

What would life be like without the amazing ability of memory? Consider, for a moment, the imaginary description that follows. You awaken each morning with the knowledge a baby normally has. Again and again, you do things for the "first" time. You do not know how to use a comb, toothbrush, or razor. You eat breakfast with strangers, introductions being impossibility because none can remember his own name. If you find your way to the vehicle to drive to work, you cannot remember how to start or stop it, which side of the road to drive on, or even which route to take to get there. When you somehow arrive at the workplace without injury, you are the "new" man on the job, with no experience or skill to employ. At the close of your "first" workday, you face the disturbing dilemma of having no place to go. Someone kindly directs you to your home, but you have no memory of ever having been there before and again meet a family of strangers.

The Christian life would be an impossibility, for God would remain a stranger. We would hear of Jesus and His love, His death on

the cross, and His rising from the tomb; but the inspiration would die as the story ended. Without the ability to look into the past, the faithfulness of God would lack meaning.

Without memory, learning would be an impossibility. Experience is a good teacher, but it would be no teacher at all were it not for memory. We rightly say that a child has not learned his lesson until he can remember it. To live without memory is to remain perpetually a mental infant.

Could one survive without memory? Spiritually, no. Physically, only with the complete care of another. Praise God for the marvel of memory!

Experts confess that presently they understand little concerning the memory process. They also concede that there is little hope of ever understanding it in depth. Yet God understands it completely and, greater still, He created it!

How much can I memorize? Some have memorized much more than others, and we are quick to suggest that this is due to differences in ability. To a certain extent this is true, but much of the variation in memory is due to personal choice and effort. Memory is a form of discipline and can be developed to some degree in almost everyone. The most accomplished in memorization are so

because of much hard work and determination. So instead of saying, "I have a poor memory," I might rather say, "I need to be more disciplined."

What can I memorize? One man may excel in numbers, while another can remember names of people he met only once. Our interest in a given area influences our ability to remember details in relation to it. We ought to consider what we can best remember. Am I known for my catalog of jokes or for my wealth of memorized Scripture?

As with every marvel that God creates, the devil seeks to corrupt our memory and to use it to our hurt and destruction. Our hearts ache for those whose lives are ruined by the haunting memories of war. Others waste this wonder by remembering the perceived wrongs of others against them. Some people fail to move beyond the memory of former sin and spend their lives in paralyzing guilt. Tremendous potential is lost, and serious injury suffered when the devil controls the memory of man.

Are we grateful that God is greater than our memory?

Christ used this wonder when facing His temptation in the wilderness. Many temptations come to us when the written Word is not in our hands. Our memory is the

primary tool of the Spirit in aiding us. We determine the extent to which He can use the Word or verses of song to deliver us from temptation.

Consider the power of memory when it is in the hand of God and you are facing the following feelings or temptations.

Inadequacy. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Pride. "For without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). "But who am I ...? for all things come of thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Anger. "Doest thou well to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4). "Let every man be . . . slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:19, 20).

Fear. "Fear not: for I am with thee" (Isaiah 43:5). "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2).

Weariness. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

Bitterness. "If ye forgive not . . . neither will your Father forgive" (Matthew 6:15). "Father, forgive

them" (Luke 23:34).

Greed. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). "Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:5).

Lust. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery" (Matthew 5:28). "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Grief. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying" (Revelation 21:4).

Discouragement. "Greater is he

that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "What doest thou here, Elijah? . . . I have left me seven thousand in Israel" (1 Kings 19:13, 18).

And so we reconfirm that the Word of God is our lifeline in temptation. The devil must shudder when he sees a Christian armed with the memory of the Word of God!

This challenge faces you and me. Could we survive if the written Word were taken from us? What are we doing with the Word in our memory?

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

M. S. Millerstown, PA.



Seasoned Speech (Part 1) A Well of Life

"The mouth of a righteous man is a well verbs 10:11).

An Oriental traveler, trudging up and down over dusty hills, quickened his step at the sight of verdant trees shading a well. A farmer threshing grain under the burning sun welcomed a pitcher of cool, freshly-drawn well water. Children, hot and panting from their play, clustered around the village well to draw up brimming

bucketfuls of refreshing water.

A weary traveler on the pathway of life, bowed under a heavy burden, straightens his back and lengthens his stride at the sound of a few well-chosen words of encouragement. An elderly saint approaching the valley of the shadow of death receives gratefully strengthening words of comfort. Young children, listening to their Sunday school teacher, attentively soak in the words of life.

Words can be both refreshing and life-giving. What blessing,

comfort, edification, and even life may flow from the tongue. But words contain as much potential for evil as they do for good. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). A stream of words can carry either hurt or healing, violence or peace, death or life. What makes the difference? What is the source of the potency of words, whether good or bad?

Just as a well taps into an underground reservoir of water, so speech flows from the hidden springs of the heart. Jesus succinctly stated, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). Words are powerful because they reflect the character of the speaker. Because of this, a person's character either increases or decreases the value of his words.

Words are potent because they are the product of a thinking, reasoning being. Sometimes we excuse a slip of our tongue by saying, "I didn't think before I spoke." The tongue, however,

never moves of its own volition—it forms words only as commanded by the brain. What we should say is, "I did not intend to reveal what I was thinking." Too often we focus on controlling our lips when we should focus on controlling our minds.

A righteous man's speech carries the power of life because it flows from a life-giving source. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). God often uses a man's tongue as a channel to bring life to another.

Sometimes it seems as though the source is dry when we know we should speak. Then we in faith must claim the promise, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:1). God will not fail to give us the words we need to speak for Him. May our hearts be wells that are tapped into the living water so our words can carry life to others.

M.S.G. Myerstown, PA.





The Thoughts of the Lord.

*'But I am poor and needy;
yet the Lord thinketh upon me:
thou art my help and my deliverer;
make no tarrying, O my God"*

(Psalm 40:17).

Thy thoughts toward me are many, Lord,
Lo, more than I can ever know.
Thou Lord, dost see and help me through
Each gladsome day and tragic woe.
I'm very poor and needy, Lord,
Unworthy of such endless love.
Thou lab'rest much on my behalf,
To lead me to the realms above.
I know I'm so unworthy, Lord,
Of all that Thou hast done for me.
Thou gayest Thy beloved Son,
To bring salvation full and free.
And yet Thy constant, guiding hand
And ceaseless, changeless, boundless love
Hath blessed my life and warmed my heart.
I feel within responsive love!
Thy thoughts toward me—so many, Lord—
Each day more precious are to me.
Continue, Lord, Thy constant work,
And guide my steps safe home to Thee. —E. M. H.

