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Forward

God remembers every deed. He remembers both the righteous and the evil deeds.

We too must remember all that God has done for us and all his people throughout the ages. Without recalling God's goodness, we will find ourselves without hope or purpose for our lives,

We have help in remembering.

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them remember what he had been teaching them. This promise ensures the validity of the New Testament. The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and teachings, and the Holy Spirit helped them remember without taking away their individual perspectives.

We can be confident that the Gospels are accurate records of what Jesus taught and did (see 1 Cor. 2:10-14). The Holy Spirit can help us in the same way. As we study the Bible, we can trust him to plant truth in our mind, convince us of God's will, and remind us when we stray from it.

Chapter 1

God Remembers his Covenants.

Psalm 105:8

He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.

The nation Israel, the people through whom God revealed his laws to mankind, is descended from Abraham. God chose Abraham and promised that his descendants would live in the land of Canaan (now called Israel), and that they would be too numerous to count (Genesis 17:6-8). Abraham's son was Isaac; Isaac's son was Jacob. These three men are considered the patriarchs or founders of Israel. God blessed them because of their faith (see Hebrews 11:8-21).

Commentary by Matthew Henry reviews Psalms 105:8-23.

Let us remember the Redeemer's marvellous works, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. Though true Christians are few number, strangers and pilgrims upon earth, yet a far better inheritance than Canaan is made sure to them by the covenant of God; and if we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, none can do us any harm. Afflictions are among our mercies. They prove our faith and love, they humble our pride, they wean us from the world, and quicken our prayers. Bread is the staff which supports life; when that staff is broken, the body fails and sinks to the earth. The word of God is the staff of spiritual life, the food and support of the soul: the sorest judgment is a famine of hearing the word of the Lord

Psalm 105:42

For he remembered his holy promise, and he remembered Abraham his servant.

A look at the past:

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: [18] Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Crop failure and the death of animals would devastate Judah. But Habakkuk affirmed that even in the times of starvation and loss, he would still rejoice in the Lord. Habakkuk's feelings were not controlled by the events around him but by faith in God's ability to give him strength. When nothing makes sense, and when troubles seem more than you can bear, remember that God gives strength. Take your eyes off your difficulties and look to God.

God will give his followers surefooted confidence through difficult times. They will run like deer across rough and dangerous terrain. At the proper time, God will bring about his justice and completely rid the world of evil. In the meantime, God's people need to live in the strength of his Spirit, confident in his ultimate victory over evil.

The note to the director of music was to be used when this passage was sung as a psalm in temple worship.

Habakkuk had asked God why evil people prosper while the righteous suffer. God's answer: they don't, not in the long run. Habakkuk saw his own limitations in contrast to God's unlimited control of all the world's

events. God is alive and in control of the world and its events. We cannot see all that God is doing, and we cannot see all that God will do. But we can be assured that he is God and will do what is right. Knowing this can give us confidence and hope in a confusing world.

A Look at the future

Amos 9:13-14

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. [14] And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

This verse describes a time of such an abundance of crops that the people won't be able to harvest them all.

The Jews of Amos's day had lost sight of God's care and love for them. The rich were carefree and comfortable, refusing to help others in need. They observed their religious rituals in hopes of appeasing God, but they did not truly love him. Amos announced God's warnings of destruction for their evil ways.

We must not assume that going to church and being good is enough. God expects our belief in him to penetrate all areas of our conduct and to extend to all people and circumstances. We should let Amos's words inspire us to live faithfully according to God's desires.

Chapter 2.

God Remembers His Promises

Through Jesus' death on the Cross, God will never forget your confession of faith in Jesus and starting from that point to the end of your life, He will love you with the maximum amount of love forever. You can give your life on the mission field, be the next Mother Theresa, but it will never make God love you more than when you first trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior. The constancy of God's love for believers will always be the same!

The promises of God are more than we can comprehend

1 Cor. 2:9

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

We cannot imagine all that God has in store for us, both in this life and for eternity. He will create a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; Rev. 21:1), and we will live with him forever. Until then, his Holy Spirit comforts and guides us. Knowing the wonderful and eternal future that awaits us gives us hope and courage to press on in this life, to endure hardship, and to avoid giving in to temptation. This world is not all there is. The best is yet to come.

God reveals these things by his Spirit.

1 Cor. 2:10

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

The "deep things of God" refers to God's unfathomable nature and his wonderful plan—Jesus' death and resurrection—and to the promise of salvation, revealed only to those who believe that what God says is true. Those who believe in Christ's death and resurrection and put their faith in him will know all they need to know to be saved. This knowledge,

however, can't be grasped by even the wisest people unless they accept God's message. All who reject God's message are foolish, no matter how wise the world thinks they are.

Remember the promise of many mansions.

John 14:2

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

There are few verses in Scripture that describe eternal life, but these few verses are rich with promises. Here Jesus says, "I am going there to prepare a place for you," and "I will come back." We can look forward to eternal life because Jesus has promised it to all who believe in him. Although the details of eternity are unknown, we need not fear because Jesus is preparing for us and will spend eternity with us.

Remember the promise of eternal life.

1 John 2:25

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

Christ had promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach his followers and to remind them of all that Christ had taught (John 14:26). As a result, Christians have the Holy Spirit within them ("the anointing") to keep them from going astray. In addition, they have the God-inspired Scriptures, against which they can test questionable teachings. To stay true to Christ, we must follow his Word and his Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit help you discern truth from error. For more about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does, see the notes on +John 3:6; +Acts 1:5; and +Ephes. 1:13-14.

Christ lives (remains) in us through the Holy Spirit, and we also live in Christ. This means that we place our total trust in him, rely on him for

guidance and strength, and live as he wants us to live. It implies a personal, life-giving relationship. John uses the same idea in John 15:5, where he speaks of Christ as the vine and his followers as the branches (see also 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:15).

Chapter 3

The Promises must be remembered.

Hebrews 4:1-10

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Some of the Jewish Christians who received this letter may have been on the verge of turning back from their promised rest in Christ, just as the people in Moses' day had turned back from the promised land. In both cases, the difficulties of the present moment overshadowed the reality of God's promise, and the people doubted that God would fulfill his promises. When we trust our own efforts instead of Christ's power, we too are in danger of turning back. Our own efforts are never adequate; only Christ can see us through.

[2] For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. [3] For we that have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

The Israelites of Moses' day illustrate a problem facing many who fill our churches today. They know a great deal about Christ, but they do not know him personally—they don't combine their knowledge with faith. Let the Good News about Christ benefit your life. Believe in him and then act on what you know. Trust in Christ and do what he says.

[4] For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

God rested on the seventh day, not because he was tired, but to indicate the completion of creation. The world was perfect, and God was well satisfied with it. This rest is a foretaste of our eternal joy when creation will be renewed and restored, every mark of sin will be removed, and the world will be made perfect again. Our Sabbath-rest in Christ begins when we trust him to complete his good and perfect work in us (see the note on +Hebrews 3:11).

[5] And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. [6] Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: [7] Again, he limits a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

God had given the Israelites the opportunity to enter Canaan, but they disobeyed and failed to enter (Numbers 13-14). Now God offers us the opportunity to enter his ultimate place of rest—he invites us to come to Christ. To enter his rest, you must believe that God has this relationship in mind for you; you must stop trying to create it; you must trust in Christ for it; and you must determine to obey him. *Today* is the best time to find peace with God. Tomorrow may be too late.

[8] For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. [9] There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. [10] For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

God wants us to enter his rest. For the Israelites of Moses' time, this rest was the earthly rest to be found in the Promised Land. For Christians, it is peace with God now and eternal life on a new earth later. We do not need to wait for the next life to enjoy God's rest and peace; we may have it daily now! Our daily rest in the Lord will not end with death, but will become an eternal rest in the place that Christ is preparing for us (John 14:1-4).

Since Jesus has provided for our rest through faith, why must we “make every effort to enter that rest”? This is not the struggle of doing good in order to appreciate and benefit from salvation, nor is it a mystical struggle to overcome selfishness. It refers to making every effort to obtain what God has already provided. Salvation is not to be taken for granted; to appropriate the gift God offers requires decision and commitment.

It is a matter of remembering God's promises.

Chapter 4

The Reason God Remembers

God remembers because we are a pardoned people.

1 Peter 1:18-19

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; [19] But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

A slave was “redeemed” when someone paid money to buy his or her freedom. God redeemed us from the tyranny of sin, not with money, but with the precious blood of his own Son (Romans 6:6-7; 1 Cor. 6:20; Col. 2:13-14; Hebrews 9:12). We cannot escape from sin on our own; only the life of God’s Son can free us.

God remembers because we are a purchased people.

1 Cor. 6:20

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

What did Paul mean when he said that our bodies belong to God? Many people say they have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies. Although they think that this is freedom, they are really enslaved to their own desires. When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit fills and lives in us. Therefore, we no longer own our bodies. “Bought at a price” refers to slaves purchased at auction. Christ’s death freed us from sin, but also obligates us to his service. If you live in a building owned by someone else, you try not to violate the building’s rules. Because your body belongs to God, you must not violate his standards for living.

1 Cor. 7:23

Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Slavery was common throughout the Roman empire. Some Christians in the Corinthian church were undoubtedly slaves. Paul said that although the Christian slaves were slaves to other human beings, they were free from the power of sin in their lives. People today are slaves to sin until they commit their lives to Christ, who alone can conquer sin’s power. Sin, pride, and fear no longer have any claim over us, just as a slave owner no longer has power over the slaves he has sold. The Bible

says we become Christ's slaves when we become Christians (Romans 6:18), but this actually means we gain our freedom, because sin no longer controls us.

God remembers because we are a preserved people.

Jude 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

Jude's letter focuses on *apostasy*—when people turn away from God's truth and embrace false teachings. Jude reminded his readers of God's judgment on those who had left the faith in the past. This letter is a warning against false teachers—in this case, probably Gnostic teachers (see the note on +Col. 2:4ff for a description of the Gnostic heresy). Gnostics opposed two of the basic tenets of Christianity—the incarnation of Christ and the call to Christian ethics. Jude wrote to combat these false teachings and to encourage true doctrine and right conduct.

Jude was a brother of James, who was one of the leaders in the early church. Both of these men were Jesus' half brothers. Mary was their mother, and Joseph was their father. Although Mary was Jesus' true mother, God was Jesus' true Father.

God remembers because we are a peculiar people.

Titus 2:14

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?

The power to live as a Christian comes from the Holy Spirit. Because Christ died and rescued us from sin, we are free from sin's control. God gives us the power and understanding to live according to his will and to do good, then we will look forward to Christ's wonderful return with eager expectation and hope.

It is not enough to renounce sin and evil desires; we must also live actively for God. To fight against lust we must say no to temptation, but we must also say yes to active service for Christ.

Christ's redeeming us opens the way for him to purify us. *Redeem* means to purchase our release from the captivity of sin with a ransom (see Mark 10:45 for more on Christ as our ransom). We are not only free from the sentence of death for our sin, but we are also purified from sin's influence as we grow in Christ.

1 Peter 2:9

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Christians sometimes speak of "the priesthood of all believers." In Old Testament times, people did not approach God directly. A priest acted as intermediary between God and sinful human beings. With Christ's victory on the cross, that pattern changed. Now we can come directly into God's presence without fear (Hebrews 4:16), and we are given the responsibility of bringing others to him also (2 Cor. 5:18-21). When we are united with Christ as members of his body, we join in his priestly work of reconciling God and man.

People often base their self-concept on their accomplishments. But our relationship with Christ is far more important than our jobs, successes, wealth, or knowledge. God has chosen us as his very own, and we have been called to represent him to others.

Chapter 5

God remembers our prayers

1 Peter 1:11

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Although the plan of salvation was a mystery to the Old Testament prophets, they still suffered persecution, and some even died for God. In contrast, some Jewish Christians who read Peter's letter had seen Jesus for themselves and knew why he came. They based their assurance on Jesus' death and resurrection. With their firsthand knowledge and

personal experience of Jesus, their faith could be even stronger than that of the Old Testament prophets.

The Spirit of Christ is another name for the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus left his ministry on earth to return to heaven, he promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, to teach, help, and guide his followers (John 14:15-17, 26; John 16:7). The Holy Spirit would tell them all about Jesus and would reveal his glory (John 15:26; John 16:14). The Old Testament prophets, writing under the Holy Spirit's inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-21), described the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament apostles, through the inspiration of the same Spirit, preached the crucified and risen Lord.

1 Peter 1:20

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Christ's sacrifice for our sins was not an afterthought, not something God decided to do when the world spun out of control.

The all-knowing, eternal God set this plan in motion long before the world was created. What a comfort it must have been to Jewish believers to know that God planned Christ's coming and his work of salvation long before the world began. This assured them that the law was not being scrapped because it didn't work, but that both the law *and* the coming of Christ were part of God's eternal plan

Sin hinders prayer.

Psalm 66:18

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Our confession of sin must be continual because we continue to do wrong. But true confession requires us to listen to God and to want to stop doing what is wrong. David confessed his sin and prayed, “Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins” (Psalm 19:12-13). When we *refuse* to repent or when we harbor and cherish certain sins, we place a wall between us and God. We may not be able to remember *every* sin we have ever committed, but our attitude should be one of confession and obedience.

Prayers are to be prayed in the right manner

Matthew 17:20

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

The disciples were unable to drive out this demon, and they asked Jesus why. He pointed to their lack of faith. It is the power of God, not our faith, that moves mountains, but faith must be present to do so. The mustard seed was the smallest particle imaginable.

Even small or undeveloped faith would have been sufficient. Perhaps the disciples had tried to drive out the demon with their own ability rather than God’s. There is great power in even a little faith when God is with us. If we feel weak or powerless as Christians, we should examine our faith, making sure we are trusting not in our own abilities to produce results, but in God’s.

Jesus wasn’t condemning the disciples for substandard faith; he was trying to show how important faith would be in their future ministry. If you are facing a problem that seems as big and immovable as a mountain, turn your eyes from the mountain and look to Christ for more faith. Only then will your work for him become useful and vibrant.

Prayers should be prayed with the right motive

Luke 1:37

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

When Mary said that, she didn't know about the tremendous opportunity she would have. She only knew that God was asking her to serve him, and she willingly obeyed. Don't wait to see the bottom line before offering your life to God. Offer yourself willingly, even when the outcome seems disastrous.

God's announcement of a child to be born was met with various responses throughout Scripture. Sarah, Abraham's wife, laughed (Genesis 18:9-15). Zechariah doubted (Luke 1:18). By contrast, Mary submitted. She believed the angel's words and agreed to bear the child, even under humanly impossible circumstances. God is able to do the impossible.

Our response to his demands should not be laughter, or doubt, but willing acceptance.

Example of prayers to remember

Matthew 6:8-13

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. [9] After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread. [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

This is often called the Lord's Prayer because Jesus gave it to the disciples. It can be a pattern for our prayers. We should praise God, pray for his work in the world, pray for our daily needs, and pray for help in our daily struggles.

The phrase "Our Father in heaven" indicates that God is not only majestic and holy, but also personal and loving. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to hallow, or honor, God's holy name. We can honor God's name by being careful to use it respectfully. If we use God's name lightly, we aren't remembering God's holiness.

Mark 11:24

Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. Jesus, our example for prayer, prayed, "Everything is possible for you. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). Our own interests and desires often motivate our prayers. We like to hear that we can have anything. But Jesus prayed with *God's* interests in mind. When we pray, we should express our desires, but want his will above ours. Check yourself to see if your prayers focus on your interests or God's.

Matthew 7:7

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Jesus tells us to persist in pursuing God. People often give up after a few halfhearted efforts and conclude that God cannot be found. But

knowing God takes faith, focus, and follow-through, and Jesus assures us that we will be rewarded. Don't give up in your efforts to seek God. Continue to ask him for more knowledge, patience, wisdom, love, and understanding. He will give them to you.

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Jesus looked ahead to a new day when he would be present with his followers not in body, but through his Holy Spirit. In the body of believers (the church), the sincere agreement of two people is more powerful than the superficial agreement of thousands, because Christ's Holy Spirit is with them.

Chapter 6

God remembers our promises and our performances

Eccles. 5:4-5

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. [5] Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

God has a plan for all people. Thus he provides cycles of life, each with its work for us to do. Although we may face many problems that seem to contradict God's plan, these should not be barriers to believing in him, but rather opportunities to discover that, without God, life's problems have no lasting solutions!

Timing is important. All the experiences listed in these verses are appropriate at certain times. The secret to peace with God is to discover, accept, and appreciate God's perfect timing. The danger is to doubt or

resent God's timing. This can lead to despair, rebellion, or moving ahead without his advice.

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

It may be easy to get discouraged, thinking that God has forgotten us. But God is never unjust. He never forgets or overlooks our hard work for him. Presently you may not be receiving rewards and acclaim, but God knows your efforts of love and ministry.

Chapter 7

Things God does not remember

God will remember our forgiven sins no more

Jeremiah 31:34

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

God would write his law on their hearts rather than on tablets of stone, as he did the Ten Commandments. In Jeremiah 17:1 their sin was engraved on their hearts so that they wanted above all to disobey. This change seems to describe an experience very much like the new birth, with God taking the initiative. When we turn our lives over to God, he, by his Holy Spirit, builds into us the desire to obey him.

The old covenant, broken by the people, would be replaced by a new covenant. The foundation of this new covenant is Christ (Hebrews 8:6). It is revolutionary, involving not only Israel and Judah, but even the Gentiles. It offers a unique personal relationship with God himself, with his laws written on individuals' hearts instead of on stone. Jeremiah looked forward to the day when Jesus would come to establish this covenant. But for us today, this covenant is here. We have the wonderful opportunity to make a fresh start and establish a permanent, personal relationship with God (see Jeremiah 29:11; Jeremiah 32:38-40).

Hebrews 8:12

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

This passage is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-34, which compares the new covenant with the old. The old covenant was the covenant of law between God and Israel. The new and better way is the covenant of grace.

Christ's offer to forgive our sins and bring us to God through his sacrificial death. This covenant is new in extent—it goes beyond Israel and Judah to include all the Gentile nations. It is new in application because it is written on our hearts and in our minds. It offers a new way to forgiveness, not through animal sacrifice but through faith. Have you entered into this new covenant and begun walking in the better way?

A changed heart, God will accept.

If our hearts are not changed, following God's rules will be unpleasant and difficult. We will rebel against being told how to live. The Holy Spirit, however, gives us new desires, helping us *want* to obey God (see Phil. 2:12-13). With new hearts, we find that serving God is our greatest joy.

Under God's new covenant, God's law is inside us. It is no longer an external set of rules and principles. The Holy Spirit reminds us of Christ's words, activates our consciences, influences our motives and desires, and makes us want to obey. Now doing God's will is something we desire with all our heart and mind.

Christ forgives completely

Hebrews 10:17

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

The writer concludes his argument with this powerful statement that God will remember our sins no more. Christ forgives completely, so there is no need to confess our past sins repeatedly. As believers, we can be confident that the sins we confess and renounce are forgiven and forgotten.

Chapter 8

Taking communion is a remembrance of Jesus

1 Cor. 11:24

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

What does the Lord's Supper mean? The early church remembered that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night of the Passover meal (Luke 22:13-20).

Just as Passover celebrated deliverance from slavery in Egypt, so the Lord's Supper celebrates deliverance from sin by Christ's death.

Christians pose several different possibilities for what Christ meant when he said, "This is my body." (1) Some believe that the wine and bread actually become Christ's physical blood and body. (2) Others believe that the bread and wine remain unchanged, but Christ is spiritually present with the bread and wine. (3) Still others believe that the bread and wine symbolize Christ's body and blood.

Christians generally agree, however, that participating in the Lord's Supper is an important element in the Christian faith and that Christ's presence, however we understand it, strengthens us spiritually.

What is this new covenant? In the old covenant, people could approach God only through the priests and the sacrificial system. Jesus' death on the cross ushered in the new covenant or agreement between God and us.

Now all people can personally approach God and communicate with him. The people of Israel first entered into this agreement after their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 24), and it was designed to point to the day when Jesus Christ would come. The new covenant completes, rather than replaces, the old covenant, fulfilling everything the old covenant looked forward to (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). Eating the bread and drinking the cup shows that we are remembering Christ's death for us and renewing our commitment to serve him.

Jesus said, "Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." How do we remember Christ in the Lord's Supper? By thinking about what he did and why he did it. If the Lord's Supper becomes just a ritual or a pious habit, it no longer remembers Christ, and it loses its significance.

Rev. 2:5

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Paul had once commended the church at Ephesus for its love for God and others (Ephes. 1:15), but many of the church founders had died, and many of the second-generation believers had lost their zeal for God. They were a busy church—the members did much to benefit themselves and the community—but they were acting out of the wrong motives. Work for God must be motivated by love for God or it will not last.

For Jesus to “remove your lampstand from its place” would mean the church would cease to be an effective church. Just as the seven-branched candlestick in the temple gave light for the priests to see, the churches were to give light to their surrounding communities. But Jesus warned them that their lights could go out.

Chapter 9

Remember the Creator in the Days of Your Youth

Eccles. 12:1

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

A life without God can produce a bitter, lonely, and hopeless old age. A life centered around God is fulfilling; it will make the “days of trouble”—when disabilities, sickness, and handicaps cause barriers to enjoying life—satisfying because of the hope of eternal life. Being young is exciting. But the excitement of youth can become a barrier to closeness with God if it makes young people focus on passing pleasures instead of eternal values. Make your strength available to God when it is still yours—during your youthful years. Don’t waste it on evil or meaningless activities that become bad habits and make you callous. Seek God now.

Remember that God is always with you.

Joshua 1:6-9

Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. [7] Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe

to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

[8] This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. [9] Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead. But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria. He said that to succeed Joshua must (1) be strong and courageous because the task ahead would not be easy, (2) obey God's law, and (3) constantly read and study the Book of the Law—God's Word. To be successful, follow God's words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world's standards, but you will be a success in God's eyes—and his opinion lasts forever.

Remembering the past will settle the future.

Deut. 6:12

Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Moses warned the people not to forget God when they entered the Promised Land and became prosperous. Prosperity, more than poverty, can dull our spiritual vision because it tends to make us self-sufficient and eager to acquire still more of everything—except God. The same thing can happen in our church. Once we become successful in terms of

numbers, programs, and buildings, we can easily become self-sufficient and less sensitive to our need for God. This leads us to concentrate on self-preservation rather than thankfulness and service to God.

Chapter 10

God has not forgotten you.

You are not alone.

Hebrews 13:5

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

How can we learn to be content? Strive to live with less rather than desiring more; give away out of your abundance rather than accumulating more; relish what you have rather than resent what you're missing. See God's love expressed in what he has provided, and remember that money and possessions will all pass away. (See Phil. 4:11 for more on contentment, and 1 John 2:17 for the futility of earthly desires.)

We become content when we realize God's sufficiency for our needs. Christians who become materialistic are saying by their actions that God can't take care of them—or at least that he won't take care of them the way they want. Insecurity can lead to the love of money, whether we are rich or poor. The only antidote is to trust God to meet all our needs.

God understands Your Pain

Psalm 34:15

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

Somehow we think that peace should come to us with no effort. But David explained that we are to seek and pursue peace. Paul echoed this thought in Romans 12:18. A person who wants peace cannot be argumentative and contentious. Because peaceful relationships come from our efforts at peacemaking, work hard at living in peace with others each day.

There is hope in God.

Psalm 73:26

My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Asaph realized that the rich who put their hope, joy, and confidence in their wealth live in a dream world. A dream exists only in the mind of the dreamer. Don't let your life's goals be so unreal that you awaken too late and miss the reality of God's truth. Happiness and hope can be a reality, but only when they are based on God, not on riches. Because reality is in God, we should get as close to him as we can in order to be realistic about life.

God is a place of refuge.

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The fear of mountains or cities suddenly crumbling into the sea as the result of a nuclear blast haunts many people today. But the psalmist says that even if the world ends, we need not fear. In the face of utter destruction, the writer expressed a quiet confidence in God's ability to save him. It seems impossible to consider the end of the world without

becoming consumed by fear, but the Bible is clear—God is our refuge even in the face of total destruction. He is not merely a temporary retreat; he is our eternal refuge and can provide strength in any circumstance.

God bring deliverance through the power of prayer.

Psalm 34:4-6

I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. [5] They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. [6] This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

God promises great blessings to his people, but many of these blessings require our active participation. He will deliver us from fear (Psalm 34:4), save us out of our troubles (Psalm 34:6), guard and deliver us (Psalm 34:7), show us goodness (Psalm 34:8), supply our needs (Psalm 34:9), listen when we talk to him (Psalm 34:15), and redeem us (Psalm 34:22), but we must do our part. We can appropriate his blessings when we seek him (Psalm 34:4, 10), cry out to him (Psalm 34:6, 17), trust him (Psalm 34:8), fear him (Psalm 34:7, 9), refrain from lying (Psalm 34:13), turn from evil, do good and seek peace (Psalm 34:14), are humble (Psalm 34:18), and serve him (Psalm 34:22).

God keeps you in perfect peace.

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

People will praise God on the day of the Lord when Christ establishes his kingdom (see Isaiah 12).

Isaiah 26 is a psalm of trust, praise, and meditation. Once more, God revealed the future to Isaiah.

At times the “path of the righteous” doesn’t seem smooth and it isn’t easy to do God’s will, but we are never alone when we face tough times. God is there to help us through difficulties, to comfort us, and to lead us. God does this by giving us a purpose (keeping our mind centered on him, Isaiah 26:3) and giving us provisions as we travel. God provides us with relationships of family, friends, and mentors. God gives us wisdom to make decisions and faith to trust him. Don’t despair; stay on God’s path.

God gives strength to the weary.

Isaiah 40:29

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Isaiah describes God’s power to create, his provision to sustain, and his presence to help. God is almighty and all-powerful; but even so, he cares for each of us personally. No person or thing can be compared to God (Isaiah 40:25). We describe God as best we can with our limited knowledge and language, but we only limit our understanding of him and his power when we compare him to what we experience on earth. What is your concept of God, especially as revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ? Don’t limit his work in your life by underestimating him.

Even the strongest people get tired at times, but God’s power and strength never diminish. He is never too tired or too busy to help and listen. His strength is our source of strength. When you feel all of life

crushing you and cannot go another step, remember that you can call upon God to renew your strength.

Hoping in the Lord is expecting that his promise of strength will help us to rise above life's distractions and difficulties. It also means trusting in God. Trusting helps us to be prepared when he speaks to us. Then we will be patient when he asks us to wait and expect him to fulfill the promises found in his Word.

Remember that God is faithful.

Lament. 3:21-23

This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

[22] It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. [23] They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Jeremiah saw one ray of hope in all the sin and sorrow surrounding him: "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail." God willingly responds with help when we ask. Perhaps there is some sin in your life that you thought God would not forgive. God's steadfast love and mercy are greater than any sin, and he promises forgiveness.

Rest in God's Love.

Ephes. 3:18

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

God's love is total, says Paul. It reaches every corner of our experience. It is *wide*—it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world. God's love is *long*—it continues the length of our lives. It is *high*—it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is *deep*—it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love. For another prayer about God's immeasurable and inexhaustible love, see Paul's words in Romans 8:38-39.

“The fullness of God” is fully expressed only in Christ (Col. 2:9-10). In union with Christ and through his empowering Spirit, we are complete. We have all the fullness of God available to us. But we must appropriate that fullness through faith and through prayer as we daily live for him. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is also for you. You can ask the Holy Spirit to fill every aspect of your life to the fullest.

We are not only to remember what God has done and is now doing in our lives, but we are to show honor and reference at all times to God.

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Additional comments taken from:

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