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### *Precious Memories*

*Precious mem'ries, unseen angels,  
Sent from somewhere to my soul;  
How they linger, ever near me,  
And the sacred past unfold*

*Precious father, loving mother,  
Fly across the lonely years;  
And old home scenes of my childhood,  
In fond memory appear.*

*As I travel on life's pathway,  
Know not what the years may hold;  
As I ponder, hope grows fonder,  
Precious mem'ries flood my soul.*

*Chorus: Precious mem'ries,  
How they linger,  
How they ever flood my soul.  
In the stillness of the midnight,  
Precious sacred scenes unfold.*

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**Editor's note:** *This issue features thoughts about both memories and time because they are so very intertwined. It started out to be on time, but when I heard Mike Kemnitzer give the following as a devotional in a nursing home, it had to be included.*

### YESTERDAY

Yesterday exists only in fading memories, worn out photographs, and history books. Yesterday is often a collection of imperfect records kept in imperfect medium which can easily be misplaced or destroyed by fire.

Yet, yesterday is also one of the finest learning centers available, if we are willing to go there to learn. God has provided to us the greatest learning center ever—His word. Paul had the opportunity to teach the Philippians many things (Philippians 4:8-9), and he understood the influence he had on them. In Philippians 4:11-13, we read that Paul's past taught him many things. He knew what it was to be in need or to have plenty. He had learned the secret of being content in every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, living in plenty or in want. He went on to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Unlike most of our recollections of yesterday, the bible is maintained by the perfect God. It will not fade away. Peter said, "...the word of God ... lives and abides forever..." You know there is no living space in yesterday; you cannot physically live there. In fact, we have trouble accurately recalling it (Ecclesiastes 7:10). When we see an event or we experience something, usually what we remember and what truly happened are different. When we tell stories, we emphasize some points and ignore others because that is our nature—to make the story more exciting. If several people in a room observe an event, each one will give a different account, even when each is being totally truthful.

In yesterday, things happened to us, but our memories are selective. Some memories of yesterday are pleasant; but some are not so pleasant, and we want to forget them. Many have memories filled

One day, you'll be just a **memory** for some people. Do your **best** to be a good one.

with regrets, mistakes, and failures they would like to forget; but the truth is that we don't always have control over what happens to us. We can only control our reaction. Paul didn't have pleasant memories of his past (when he was called Saul). He said in Galatians 1:13-14, *"For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."*

We can learn not only from our own experiences, but from the experience of others as well. We can learn from family as Timothy in his youth learned from his mother and his grandmother. We can learn from faithful Christians who have learned, then passed their knowledge on to us, as when Paul told Timothy to commit the things Paul had taught him to *"faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

Most importantly, we can learn from God's word, as in Romans 15:4, *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."*

Still, yesterday does not control our future. Some people have yesterdays of faithful service to God, as in 1 Timothy 1:18-20: *"Timothy, my son, I give you the instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience."*



God's standard is not yesterday. It is today. Yesterday tells us how we arrived to the point where we are. Tomorrow is ahead of us, and we don't have to continue in the same direction. We can change from the wrong direction to the direction leading us to God and the hope of an eternal home with Him.

Mike Kemnitzer, Elder, Rolla, MO  
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## LEARNING TO FORGET

Annika Sorenstam is the #1 ranked women's golfer in the world. Over the past few years she has pretty much dominated the LPGA Tour. Of course, to be the best at anything requires much hard work and constant practice. It's obvious from her straight drives, accurate iron shots, and deadly putting stroke that she puts her time in on the practice range. Annika has the ability to forget what just happened on the last hole. If she plays a good hole

or bad hole, she forgets about it realizing that once it's over, it's history.

Just as many golfers are haunted by memories of bad shots, so are many people haunted by the memory of their past mistakes and sins. We do ourselves more harm than good by dwelling and worrying about the past. How many of us beat ourselves up constantly for sins we committed long ago? *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* (Heb. 8:12) When God forgives our sins, He also forgets about our sins. Rather than reminding Him of our sins, we too should forgive ourselves and forget it.

Satan will use our past against us as often as we will allow him. He wants us to worry about our past sins, whether they are forgiven or not. The Devil wants us to focus on our past sins and take our eyes off God and what we could accomplish for Him today. The one who focuses on the past jeopardizes the future. We must all understand that the past is just that, the past. I can do nothing about yesterday except learn from my experience.

At the time of this writing, as a 33-year-old (Christian husband and father of three) I have many memories that I want to remember for a long time. On the other hand, I also have memories that I don't want to remember and don't need to for my own spiritual well-being. I believe every Christian would do well to follow the advice of Paul: *"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 3:13-14) Let us learn to forget the past and press on toward our goal of heaven.

Chuck Ball, Cabot, AR

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## LEST WE FORGET

On September 11, 2006, the fifth anniversary of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, memories of that day were still fresh. Radio and television carried non-stop reminders of that day and the impact it has had on our Nation.

It is still important to remember that day, sad though it was. Our hearts grieve for those who died so needlessly, and our thoughts and prayers are with their loved ones. They will never forget, nor will we. Time eventually will dull the searing pain of loss and will fade the images seared into our minds, but we will always remember where we were when we first heard, what we were doing, how the rest of that awful day played out.

It is important to remember another day as well—the day our Lord gave His life on Calvary's cross. That was a tragic day in one sense in that our sins cost Him His life. It was a glorious day of victory for those who believe in Him and do our best to follow Him. Without that day and the world-changing event that took place, we would be hopelessly lost in sin.

Just as some do not want to see the footage of airliners hitting massive structures, some do not want to think about Jesus on the cross. Just as some do not want to be reminded of that day, others do not want to be reminded of His death. Some only want to be reminded once a quarter or a couple of times a year of what He suffered for us.

To be reminded of His death on that cross calls for change—change in our hearts, attitudes, and behavior. We are a forgetful people, so we need to be reminded often of the tremendous love and mercy He showed the day He died on the cross. He left us with a weekly reminder of His sacrifice for us. Each Lord's Day, we partake of emblems representing His body and His blood to remind us that He gave His life and shed His blood. Without that, we have no hope beyond this life.

Lest we forget what He did for us, let us not miss an opportunity to be reminded. After all, we owed a debt we could not pay. Praise God, Jesus paid a debt He did not owe!

*Evelyn Waite, Rolla, MO*



### **STRETCHING TO THE SKY... OR WAITING FOR A CONVENIENT TIME?**

Bare, leafless tree branches stretch up toward an unbelievably blue sky like a thousand old fingers reaching



for something... something beautiful, something just out of reach... so tantalizingly close. As I write this, it's too early to grow leaves or bear fruit, but it's never too early to reach as high as possible...never too early to dream of what might be, what can be, what will be...when the time is right. As the tree, we too are bound by limitations, by time, by circumstance...but our calling while we wait is profound. We are encouraged to stretch upwards with all of our being, heart, soul, mind, and strength. Am I stretching? Or am I just hiding in the grayness of my struggle, anxiety, and disappointment, waiting for a convenient time to try harder...to find purpose...to stretch myself? A tree reaches for the sky. Can I reach

for love with all I am? "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water..." Maybe I walk, stand or sit...but how often do I stretch myself?

Chuck Hicks, Searcy, AR



### **THOUGHTS ABOUT TIME**

Time. It governs our lives. Time was on my mind a lot as I prepared for retirement from a job I loved for over 23 years. As of this writing, I had only 15 working days left on that job. It was the latter few weeks of the year, so "holiday times" were also on my mind. All these things together caused me to think more deeply about time than usual.

God created time. It began when God created all things at the outset of Biblical history. God transcends time; He was and is and always will be. He existed before time as we know it; He will continue to exist when time as we know it ceases. He is not bound by time as we are. In fact, with Him, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day (2 Peter 3:8).

Time can be used, wasted, spent, or lost. If we don't make good use of our time, it is wasted time. We can spend time wisely or foolishly. Time whiled away in foolish pursuits is time used foolishly. Have you ever lost time? Time unwisely used is lost forever. It cannot be recreated or retrieved.



Time is marked by milestones in our lives. Births, marriages, and deaths make indelible impressions on us. Other milestones include starting school, graduating from high school or college, birthdays, family reunions and such. We know of being teenagers, young adults, middle aged, and even elderly.

Time can be marked by catastrophic events. My parents lived through the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy. They did not live to see the horrible events of September 11, 2001. For those of us living at that time, it is as deeply seared as a landmark in our lives as was Pearl Harbor in my parents' generation.

Seasons are times. We speak of springtime, summertime, and wintertime. Sometimes we find ourselves with "too much time" on our hands. Conversely, there are sometimes "not enough hours in the day" to accomplish all we think we should accomplish.

A special time or occasion in life is a "good time." Hard times include financial setbacks, loss of health, loss of loved ones or a prison sentence. Could being fired from a job be a "bad time," or some type of heartache or a diagnosis of a terminal disease? Boring times come from monotonous routines. My husband works with a young Christian man who is serving a life sentence in prison. He describes his life as being very boring for the most part because the routine is so monotonous. On the other hand, making wedding plans, graduating from college, or beginning a career are exciting times. They can also be stressful times.

Even some of the songs that we sing speak of time. The beginning words of one song are, "Time is filled with swift transition..." Another song tells us, "Swiftly we're turning life's daily pages, swiftly the hours are changing to years." It asks, "How are we using God's golden moments?" Years ago, a popular song talked about what the singer would do if he could save time in a bottle.

The Bible describes times of trouble, and it reassures us that, "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." (Psalm 9:9). Times of healing are described in Jeremiah 8:15 and Jeremiah 14:19. The Bible describes times of distress (Jeremiah 14:8; Daniel 12:1); times of punishment in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and times of the Lord's vengeance in Jeremiah 51:6. The time of the end is referenced in Chapters 8, 11, and 12 of Daniel; and Micah mentions a time of disaster in Micah 2:3.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon tells us there is a time for everything.

*"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to break down and a time to build up; A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain and a time to lose; A time to keep and a time to throw away; A time to tear and a time to sew; A time to keep silence and a time to speak; A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time of peace."* Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

He covered it all in those few verses.

We can do nothing to *control* time, but we must make the *best use* of the time we have on this earth. Solomon spoke of prioritizing life in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.** For God will bring every work into judgment,*

*including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil."*

Time is invaluable to us all. May we make the best use of it and invest it wisely, for *"it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,"* Hebrews 9:27.

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri



## AUTUMN LEAVES

Something I miss from the few years I lived in Nashville, TN is the bright color of the leaves in the fall. During this time of year, the hills are alive with blazing crimson; orange, the color of a sunset; and brilliant, beautiful yellow. Each fall, I'd pick up some of the prettiest leaves and save them between the pages of a book - trying to preserve that beauty.

Our older Christians remind me of those beautiful fall leaves. Their edges may be beginning to curl up a bit and they may be a bit more fragile to the touch...but with what intensity they live their last few years!

Most have gotten past the trivialities of an earthly life and are aglow with the beauty that only comes when you walk through life with our Lord. They are not afraid to expend all their time and strength and material means to reach out to those who don't know Jesus as well as they do.



They are the first to take food to those in need; they sit through long nights with those who are ill; and they volunteer their time and efforts to keep the building and grounds in good order.

When I see our older saints, I see the vibrant colors of Jesus' love shining through them.

Lorna Smith, Lubbock, Texas





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