

Mary Craig

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David the psalmist cried, “Remember, O Lord, your tender mercies and your lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to your mercy remember me for your goodness’ sake, O Lord.” Psalm 25.6, 7

Have you ever cried out to the Lord like that? Or have you prayed a heart cry like Hannah? “O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your handmaid, and remember me, and not forget your handmaid, but will give unto your handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.” 1 Samuel 1.11

Certainly we want God to remember us always, though in desperate times we cry out to him from the depths of our being. The time of Malachi was such a time because prophets had predicted God’s blessings but years had passed and those prophecies of hope were yet unfulfilled. With expectations blasted, dreams shattered, hearts broken, and many lives laying in ruin, people knew disappointment, disillusionment, and discouragement. To add to that, they were hypercritical of God’s ways; faith and worship eroded.

We can understand this, can’t we? We can identify. God chose Malachi, whose name means “messenger of the Lord,” to explain.

First God affirmed His past and present love for His people. He had chosen them. He remembers His covenant (Malachi 1.2; Gen 9.15, 16; Ex 6.5; Lev 26.42; Ezek 16.60; Luke 1.72). Yet God mourns when we question divine love under affliction. It wearies Him. Good for us that God doesn’t change, Malachi says; that we are not consumed. (Mal. 3.6)

God remembers His covenant with Levi, a covenant of life and peace. Life and peace were given to Levi for the fear wherewith he feared God and was afraid before God’s Name. Malachi 2.6ff says the law of truth was in his mouth and iniquity was not found in his lips. He turned many away from iniquity. This is what God expects from His priests because the priest is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

The people have profaned the covenant. They have broken the commandments in a Godward sense. If God is their Father, where is His honor? “Will a man rob God?” asks the prophet. (Malachi 3.8) Priests and people commit spiritual adultery, bear false witness to the Living God, offer lame sacrifices, and give less than they should. The people say it is vain to serve God. “Where is the profit in keeping God’s ordinance?”

Don’t we feel like this at times? Malachi says God’s people call the proud happy and the wicked set for life and think God is out there delivering those who tempt Him. Is there any value to living a holy life before a holy God? (Malachi 3.14, 15)

The thing is: God loves His covenant people even though they question the existence of His love. Yet the word “curse” occurs seven times in the short prophetic book of Malachi. The prophet warns that the Lord’s Day is coming. All the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble in fire, a fire that will leave neither root nor branch.

But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of Righteousness
Arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth
And grow up as calves of the stall.
You shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles
Of your feet in the day that I shall do this,
Says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 4.1-3

How do we get there? It seems that God has a roll book. It is mentioned metaphorically in more than a dozen passages. Exodus 32.33, for example, tells us that God tells Moses that He will cross out the names of people who have sinned against Him. Jesus tells His disciples to rejoice that their names are written in heaven. (Luke 10.20) Paul speaks of the book of life in Philippians 4.3. Daniel 12.1 and Revelation 21.27 tell how everyone named in the Lamb’s book of life will be saved.

Malachi 3.16 gives us insight into this book of remembrance. In Esther 6.1 the usage there refers to a feature of Persian court life where Persian monarchs maintained lists of their benefactors so that proper rewards could be given out to them later. Malachi 3.16 says:

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another;
And the Lord hearkened, and heard it,
And a book of remembrance was written before Him
For them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name.

Now we have a clue. We have some instruction. We can do this. We can, by God’s grace:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to put within us the fear of the Lord.
2. We can think about God’s Name and what it means to bear that Name to the uttermost parts of the earth as witnesses of Jesus Christ.
3. We can revere the Name of God.
4. We can honor God with the honor due Him, keeping God in our thoughts.
5. We can determine by God’s grace not to rob God in the giving of our tithes and offerings, in the giving of ourselves, but rather determine to give gladly, generously, graciously, and as the Holy Spirit guides. (Malachi 3.10; Romans 12.1, 2; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9)

God has revealed Himself in hundreds of names in the Scriptures. Search them out. Meditate on them. Pray them. Call upon the name of the Lord. Cherish them. Spread His Name and Fame around the world and across backyard fences. Glorify His Name. Be God’s cheerleader. Be God’s witness. Be the messenger to tell others of God’s mighty deeds of creation and redemption.

Keeping God in our thoughts involves creative thinking and invention as well as placing a value on God. It is not merely reflection; it is deliberate, practical action. It is the same when God keeps us in His thoughts, e.g., Psalm 40.17.

But I am poor and needy; yet
 The Lord thinks upon me;
 You are my help and my deliverer;
 Make no tarrying, O my God.

God remembers His covenant. He remembers the land. He remembers His mercy and truth, His holy promise. He remembers certain people and distinguishes one person from another. He pities our frame and remembers we are only dust. As to some, He remembers iniquity, but to those in Christ He says, "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." (Hebrews 8.12)

The Word of God admonishes us to remember the Lord our God. (Ps 20.7; Deut. 8.18) We are to remember the former days, our past and God's saving mercies. To those that remember God's commandments to do them...and who keep His covenant, and who fear Him...mercy. Ps 103.18, 17

Remember the Lord; and He will remember you. It's a good way to keep Thanksgiving, don't you think?

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Pastors:

Rev. Jim Craig
 Dr. Mary Craig



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