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THE PUNY MEMORY OF MAN & THE PERFECT MEMORY OF GOD

Can we conceive of two greater extremes than those which our title suggests? The memory of the Eternal God! Every word He has ever uttered, every action He has ever taken, every decree He has ever made eternally remain fresh in His mind. The vastness of the universe with its countless planets in limitless space never for a single moment escape His thought, He calleth every star by name (PS 147 V 4).

There is too the immensity of His dealings in all the affairs of men and demons not only in the past but also in days which are yet future until this very planet be dissolved; the minutest details of it all be it past, present, or future are ever in His mind. Never does a divine decree escape His memory, never is a promise forgotten.

In sharp contrast, how feeble are our memories? And what we do remember so often bears the marks of depravity, for memory like every other faculty of man has been affected by the Fall, and this is abundantly evident even in the believer as well as in the unregenerate. Have we not all got a power to retain the foolish and the worthless, and a great tendency to forget the profitable and the good? Do not the evil things and the faults and failures in others stick in our minds whilst the good and the virtuous qualities are forgotten? How often can a foolish story be re-called after years, yet a sermon is forgotten in hours. But the saddest aspect of our memories is the ease of our forgetfulness of God and all His countless blessings. It is so often true of us as it was of Israel in the Old Testament, "Thou hast forgotten God that formed thee" (DEUT.32.V.18) "Thou has forgotten the God of thy salvation" (IS.17.V.10) "They have forgotten the Lord their God" (JER.3.V.21) Do not these words find an echo in our hearts? Yet in spite of this He never forgets us, "He knoweth our frame, He REMEMBERETH that we are dust" (PS.103 .V.14.) "... yet will I not forget thee" (IS.49.V.15) is the promise of God to His own.

If we were making a study of the word "remember" we should discover as we looked up a concordance that the first five times it occurs in scripture it is used in connection with The Almighty, "And God remembered Noah" (GEN.8.V.1) Twice in connection with the bow in the cloud God says "I will remember" (GEN.9.V.15&16), when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah "He remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" (GEN.19.V.29) "God remembered Rachael" (GEN.30.V.22). It is significant to note that the

first time we find the word used in scripture concerning man is "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph but forgot him" (GEN. 40. V.23). So the very early pages of our Bible give abundant proof to the truth of our title.

In Psalm 136 the Psalmist is recalling the history of Israel, and in verse 23 says "Who remembereth us in our low estate for His mercy endureth forever", Doubtless he has in his mind the brick-kilns of Egypt, the lack of straw, the lash of the task-master's whip, the oppression of a godless and heartless king. When there was no eye to pity, no arm to protect or alleviate, God saw and heard their cries "He remembered them in their low estate". Ex.2.V.24-25 gives us greater details as to why: "God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and with Jacob and God had respect unto it"...

But the words of the Psalmist can in no way be limited to the nation of Israel, for it has reference to "The whole Israel of God" (GAL 6.V.16). Do not all the saints of God of every age unite to say "Who remembered us in our low estate"? How low was our estate by nature? As fallen creatures we languished in our sin and misery, unable to help or deliver ourselves, we lay perishing by the wayside, but in wondrous grace His eye was upon us, He saw, He had compassion, He came where we were, (LK 10 V 33) "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings (PS.40.V.2). Why did He do this? - Because He remembered us. The very word remember indicates previous thought. God's eye was ever upon the Israelites in Egypt and He ultimately delivered them because of His Covenant. So it was with us in our lost condition; His eye was ever upon us because of the covenant within the Godhead, when the Son entered into suretyship for those who were elect of God, becoming the mediator of the new covenant. Yes God remembered that He had chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world (EPH.1.V.4). Therefore did He in due time bring us from death into life. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (TITUS.1.V.2).

The Psalmist in Psalm 136 goes yet further than the initial deliverance from Egypt's bondage as a study of the context will show, for he speaks of the wilderness journey after deliverance had been effected; and throughout this experience, all the time God was with them "He remembered them". So it is with us today. The One who delivered us from sin and bondage has us forever under the shelter of His

wings, never for a moment of time does He forget us. This is a staggering thought that the Almighty Sovereign God of the universe is ever thinking of the feeblest saint; and never is any one out of His mind. As in the natural world so in the spiritual, life's days are not always sunny, Clouds and darkness are all part of the passage of time and Winter follows Summer which again will give place to Spring, sometimes it is green captures and still waters, other times dark valleys and rushing torrents. Disappointments, losses, afflictions, bereavements, but "He remembers us in our low estate" and proves Himself to be "the same yesterday, today and forever". Perhaps we stray, the heart can become cold, yes and the life even worldly, for the true believer is not immune to back-sliding, then indeed is his estate low, but even in this condition, "God remembers" for says the scripture yet again "He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake". (PS.23.V.3).

Yet another application - how low does the aged and infirm saint of God feel his estate to be on times, as the vital spark of life grows dim and the last great crisis of life seems to loom large? But at this very point "GOD REMEMBERETH OUR LOW ESTATE, FOR HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOREVER". Then it is as never before that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Remembering us and His everlasting covenant He says "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for 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 (IS.41.V.10) "And even to your old age I am He, even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you (IS.46.V.4).

No beloved, never until our feet are planted upon the streets of gold will He withdraw from beneath us the everlasting arms or remove from above us His protecting wings, "I will not forget" says He. His memory is perfect.

May the Holy Spirit so aid our failing memories that we may not forget these things but ever live in the good of the exceeding great and precious promises of our God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

Weather and sickness have caused quite a little disruption and alteration to our Church Calendar this past quarter. Nevertheless, we thank God for His protection and provision through it all, and the realization of His presence and help in all the gatherings.

On Sunday March 19th recognition was given to our brother Mr L. Gee to the work of a deacon in the church. He was commended to the Lord in prayer that God's help and blessing might be upon him as he takes this responsibility.

We look forward to our Annual Bible Convention on Wednesday April 26th, Mr Omri Jenkins was to have been the speaker, but on account of sickness he has had to cancel the engagement, and Mr Neil Richards of Neath will be with us for this occasion. We also have ... the commencement of the "Drive-in" Church.

We should pray without ceasing for these occasions when such large numbers of folk come together that God will use His Word to the blessing of many. The ministry on Sunday mornings on "The Doctrine of the Church" is still not exhausted and will continue for some weeks yet.

The possibility of a Bookstall at North Road has been before the elders and deacons for some considerable time, and plans are now in hand to set this in motion. Mr Gee has accepted responsibility for this, and in due course conservative evangelical literature will be available at the Chapel. Here again is subject matter for prayer, that amidst all the light and liberal books which are circulating in Christian circles today, God will use this to His glory and to the profit of His people in this area.

Love and greetings are again sent from the assembly to all our sick and shut-in members and friends. We assure you that you are continually remembered in our prayers both corporate and private, and trust that the messages in The Link are a help and comfort as well as keeping you in touch with the life and witness of the church.

BIBLE UNDER QUESTION. It is reported that a committee of 24 Bible scholars are at work on a new edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (the RSV). Their aim and purpose is to seek to eliminate some of the "pro-masculine language" of the Scriptures, and bring them more into line with the "liberated" position of women today as advocated by the "Women's Lib." Movements, etc. From the "other side of the fence," as you might say, a strange kind of utterance has just come out of the lips of Robert G. Bratcher - chief translator of the "Good News for Modern Man" version of the Word of God. Speaking to an ecumenical gathering of Ministers and Rabbis in South Carolina, he said that, although the Bible is one of the great "best-sellers" of all time, it is one of the most misunderstood and mis-used books ever written. According to Mr Bratcher, one of the areas of mis-use is found in the attitude that condemns homosexuals in their sin. Just how far the chief translator of Good News for Modern Man will pursue the philosophy behind his statement remains to be seen, but both of these items of news concerning the Word of God might lead us to think that it won't be long until we are fully into the age where a good many of the translations of God's word will be according to the constantly "Revised Standards" of "Modern Man", and bear little resemblance to "what the Lord God has spoken".

REPRINTED FROM "THE WICKET GATE" BY KIND PERMISSION OF MR.W.J. SEATON. REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH. INVERNESS - A TIMELY NOTE FOLLOWING OUR STUDY AT NORTH ROAD ON "THE PROCESSION OF TRUTH".

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

By John P. Thackway - DEVIZES

2/ It is clear from Gen.2:2,3 and Ex 20:8-11 that the sabbath concept has its origin in a divine work of creation. It is a commemoration of that work of God. After six days the Lord rested from his work, and we must also, and thus remember Him. But the Christian sabbath has its origin here too. Only in this case there is another work of creation involved. When our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week, that marked the end of his work Rom.4:25. There was brought into being now a new creation 2 Cor.5:17 and thus He rested cf. Heb 4:10. So we commemorate this new and greater creation, and rest on the same day our Lord did; cf. Heb 4:10 "There remaineth therefore a rest (lit. 'keeping

of a sabbath') to the people of God." John Bunyan sums this up well: "Now God rested from His works, and sanctified a day of rest to Himself as a signal of that rest; which day He also gave to His church as a day of holy rest likewise. And if Christ thus rested from His own works ... He also hath sanctified a day to Himself, as that in which He hath finished His work and given that day also to His church to be an everlasting memento of His so doing. They should keep it holy for His sake. And see, the Father's work was first, so His day went before; and as the Son's work came after, so His day accordingly succeeded". Bishop Wilson rounds this off helpfully: "The old day was buried with Christ - the new arose with Him. He had in the old creation rested (as being the author, one with the Father, of that six days' work) on the seventh day and sanctified it. But now, as the author of the new work of creation, being detained in the prison of the grave on the old seventh day, He takes another day to rest in, the following or first day of the week which thus becomes the Lord's day. Everything essential in the command goes on as it did; the non-essential point of the precise time is changed, or rather delayed a single day, to wait for its rising Master, and assume a new dignity, and be a memorial of the manifestation of a new and greater creation."

We are beginning now, to see something of the significance of the change of the day, and its new name. But this becomes ever clearer when we turn to the account of our Lord's resurrection. We find that each of the gospel writers begin by noting carefully that it was upon the first day of the week: Mt.28:1; Mk.16:2; Lk.24:1; Jn.20:1. And they also record five occasions when the risen Lord appeared to His own upon that day: to the women Mt.28:9; Mk.16:9; to Mary Magdalene Jn 20:11f; to the two on the Emmaus road Lk.24:13f 'that same day'; to Peter Lk.24:34 cf 1 Cor.15:5; and to the disciples Jn.20:19 "that same day in the evening, being the first day of the week". Moreover, we do not read of any other visits of the Saviour after that first Lord's day, until the next one comes around. Thus Jn 20:26 "And after eight days again (i.e. a week later) His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus". All this is very important. Our Lord, by His practice here, is giving the first day of the week a special prominence. He is saying in effect that this is His day, the day when, more than on any other, He will visit His people and bless them with His presence. It is the Lord's day. This is even further

confirmed by the fact that the risen Lord chose this day to shed forth His Holy Spirit upon the church. The day of Pentecost fell upon the first day of the week. And it was no accident that it did. If Lev.23:15,16 is consulted, it will be seen that the people were to count the fifty days from "the morrow after the sabbath" i.e. from the first day of the week. So we find that when the day of Pentecost was "fully come" the church was assembled together because it was the Lord's day Acts.2:1, and thus the Spirit was given. As Bishop Wilson wrote: "The gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, honours and marks out the Lord's day". It is not surprising therefore, in the light of all this, to find the apostle John on the isle of Patmos having a vision of the risen Lord, and being "in the Spirit - on the Lord's day" Rev.1:10.

We next turn to the practice of the early church for additional evidence. Let it be noted that in each of the following references, there is either the sanction or example of the apostles themselves. This is important. These men were specially endued with the Holy Spirit in order to found the gospel dispensation and settle its order and worship. They were the delegated ambassadors of Christ, and had divine authority for all their teaching and practice. Therefore, what we shall see now is for our learning and imitation. The first reference is Acts 20:6,7. Luke seems to write in a way which indicates that the practice is well known: "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread". Paul does not summon the believers together. They were there already because it was their custom to do so on that day - the Lord's day. Moreover, Paul actually waited for this day to arrive before ministering v 6 "we waited seven days. And upon the first day of the week..." Doubtless he had taught privately and individually in the week, but his formal and public ministry was reserved for this particular time, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. In his first epistle 16:1,2 he gives directions concerning the collection. He knows that day will be set aside for rest and worship, and so he writes: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Nor is this something which is peculiar to Corinth. In v.1 he writes: "As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye". He had said the same to them, indicating that they too met together on the first day of the week. We see then, that this practice was firmly established and well known

throughout the New Testament church. One more reference is Rev. 1:10. The apostle John is in exile on Patmos. The year is approximately A.D.95. But he also mentions a day: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Here is the only place in the New Testament where the Christian Sabbath is called this. But the fact that John mentions it without any word of explanation again proves that it was well known. "It is no new appellation," wrote Bishop Wilson, "or he would not have incidentally introduced it. A new name would have communicated surprise, not communicated information. By the Lord's day is undoubtedly meant the first day of the week." This evidence covers the first sixty years or so of the church's history, and brings us to near the close of the first century A.D.

As we enter the post-apostolic era, we find exactly the same thing. The subsequent history of the church confirms the New Testament history of it. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, writing about A.D.110 says: "Let every one that loveth Christ observe the Lord's day, the queen and first of days, on which also our Lord arose." Justin Martyr who died about A.D.100 wrote: "...they, both those who lived in the city and those who lived in the country, were all accustomed to meet on the day which is denominated Sunday, for the reading of the scriptures, prayer, exhortation, and communion The assembly met on Sunday because ... Jesus our Lord on this day rose from the dead." It is interesting to note that the early church had no qualms about calling the Lord's day 'Sunday'. One would have thought that they would because of the derivation of that name. It came from 'Dies Solis' - 'Day of the Sun' in the Roman Calendar. This day was dedicated by those Pagans to the sun and its worship. But the church saw that they could invest this with a higher meaning. For on this day "the Sun of Righteousness arose, with healing in his wings" Mai.4:2. Thus 'Sunday' became every bit as Christian for them as it was pagan for the Romans. May it be so for us too. May indeed all our Sundays be sabbath days, Lord's days, in the which the Lord of the Sabbath receives the worship and service of us all.

TO BE CONTINUED..