

September 27, 2020

“The Power of Remembering”  
Psalm 126

FCF: The need for roots and wings

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) There is great power in remembering God’s works.  
(magnet) We need to do it rightly.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

Thank Jonas Salk, the American virologist and medical researcher who developed one of the first polio vaccines. Thank him for that and for popularizing the saying, “Good parents give their children roots and wings.” Roots - a deep sense of belonging which offers security. Wings - the ability and freedom to explore, learn, and grow. We need both to flourish but wings depend on the roots. If you have the security of roots, then you have the freedom to spread your wings.

When you think about it, the dynamic is much the same in our relationship with God. We need the roots to have wings. What then are these roots? And how do they enable us to flourish?

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [Psalm 126](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

What role does remembering play in our lives? How do we view history? It’s a tricky thing. We can easily go to one of two extremes. The first would be to settle into nostalgia. This would be a sentimental longing or wistful appreciation for the past. You might say it pines for the world of Norman Rockwell paintings. Nostalgia is a rosy retrospection, judging the past on our personal list of greatest hits. Sadly, it can often be selective, incomplete, and a bit warped.

That’s one extreme. At the other, you have amnesia. This would be a loss of memory. But in this case it’s conscious, something we’ve chosen. The theme song would be Sam Cooke’s “Don’t Know Much About History”. To move forward, we need to wipe the slate clean. Sadly, this can be driven by a dismissal of the past and an unwillingness to learn from our predecessors.

Nostalgia (a worship of the past) and amnesia (a dismissal of the past) are both wrong. Time and again in the Scriptures, we hear the Lord calling us to remember. We see the value of such remembering here in Psalm 126. Clearly, there is a need to look to the past but to do so in the right way. There is great power in remembering God’s works. And we need to do it rightly.

What impact would such remembering have upon us? These three things. First, it would enable us to see. Second, it would embolden us to pray. Third, it would encourage us to live.

**I. ENABLES US TO SEE**

First, such remembering enables us to see ([READ Psalm 126:1-3](#)). We’re not clear of the circumstances here. But that helps open up the applications for us. There are two stages to this.

*A) Recounting*

## 1. Israel’s response

First, there is a recounting of the events and the response. Some great deliverance had taken place. There was no reason to expect it. But it came. And so Israel responds with exuberance.

2. The response of their neighbors

But their neighbors saw this deliverance as well. They are stunned by the turn of events, shocked by what they see. Israel was to be a testimony to the nations. These events served just that.

*B) Resting*

1. Realization

So we have a recounting. And then a resting. Israel hears the testimony by the nations of their own deliverance. They hear it afresh and are struck anew with wonder (READ Psalm 126:3).

2. Gladness

This gladness was a heartfelt joy. The significance of what happened landed on them. Which brings a recovery of sight and sanity, knowing again whose they were and how they were to live.

Remembering God's works enables us to see. And we need that all the time.

*Illustration:*

The Hubble Space Telescope is one of the largest and most versatile of its kind. Its orbit allows it to capture high-resolution images and a deep view of space. Hubble has brought about astrophysics breakthroughs and a PR boom to astronomy. That said, things didn't start out so well. Soon after its launch in 1990, it was discovered that the main mirror had been ground incorrectly which led to some ugly blurring. Three and a half years later, the crew of the Space Shuttle *Endeavor* was able to install a new main camera and a corrective optics package.

*Application:*

Friends, we need that sort of repair ourselves. We need a new optics package. Each of us needs that once-for-all working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, changing our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, helping us to see our need of a Savior, who He is, and what it means to follow Him. But, beyond that, we need the ongoing, continual, daily re-enabling to see that we would be able engage with issues and respond to those around us with justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

We need a once-for-all and then an ongoing recovery of sight. How does this come? One of the Lord's means is a remembering of His works, recalling and recounting - not just on our own but doing this together. For a right looking to the past brings a right living in the present.

There is great power in remembering God's works. We need to do it rightly.

**II. EMBOLDENS US TO PRAY**

That takes us to the second point. Such remembering leads to prayer. It emboldens us to pray. Remembrance of restoration then leads to prayer for it now (READ Psalm 126:4-6).

*A) Appeal*

1. A stream in the Negeb

There is an appeal expressed with two images, starting with this stream in the Negeb. The Negeb is in the southern part of Israel, a place where rain can fill the dry ravines with a torrent of water. The idea here is a prayer for a sudden restoration, a sheer gift come pouring out from heaven.

2. Through seed for sowing

But there is another image, one from the farmer's field, that of seed for sowing. Folks in an agrarian society would have known this well. This was then a prayer not for a sudden restoration but something slower and steady. Still a gift but with our own labors as part of the process.

The idea being, "Lord, however you know best, by stream or by seed, please restore us."

*B) Assurance*

That's the appeal here. It's open-handed. That said, it is uttered with assurance.

1. The expectation

Note the expectation. Sowing shall lead to reaping. The one who goes out bearing seeds shall come home with sheaves. There is open-handed humility and dependence. But also expectation.

2. The certainty

One could even say a certainty. This "shall" happen, not "it just might if we're lucky." How could they be so certain? Because, to paraphrase Francis Schaeffer, He is there and He is not silent. And nor is He deaf. The One who has moved in the past is with us now in the present.

Do you see? Remembering God's works emboldens us to pray.

*Application:*

He shall restore our fortunes. This is true. He shall restore our fortunes. In the mystery of His ways, He works through our prayers for restoration to bring that about. So we pray.

But we pray also with the expectation and certainty that that restoration will come. It may not be how we think. It may not be when we want. But restoration will come. Possibly partially in this life. And certainly finally in the next. Somehow, that restoration will come. So let us ask. Let us remember and let us ask. And let us be assured that our prayers are heard.

There is great power in remembering God's works. We need to do it rightly.

**III. ENCOURAGES US TO LIVE**

That brings us to this third and final point. Such remembering encourages us to live.

*A) Tension*

1. The evidence

For starters, it helps us to live in the tension. Step back and consider the evidence, the flow of the psalm. There had been a great deliverance in the past. But now they were in trouble again.

2. The inference

What inference can we make from the evidence? That the Christian life includes both. It is a mix of both rejoicing and weeping. It is not one or the other but both. So we should expect this. In the end, joy will have the final word. But, along the way, we will have equal parts of both.

*B) Dependence*

Remembering God's works helps us to live in the tension. And a life of dependence.

1. On the One we follow

Jesus began His public ministry at a wedding, turning gallons of water into wine so the party could go on. That's how He started. But then His days were lived out as the Man of Sorrows. His was a life of both rejoicing and weeping. What does that mean for us? As His followers, He is the One we learn from, look to, and lean upon. Which means this will be our life's pattern.

## 2. Where this leads

For that's who we follow. And where does this lead? Our hearts of stone have been turned to flesh. We will feel more deeply and truly than ever before. So following Jesus will make us more joyful. He is our God and we are His. We are forgiven and freed from our sin. So we have more joy. But then more sorrow. We will mourn unlike ever before - sin within us and around us. And we will ache for those who are cut off from these things. That's where this leads.

Remembering is not stagnant. It enables us to live - in the tension and dependence.

### *Illustration:*

We're like the wooden puppet Pinocchio, finally coming to be real.

### *Application:*

This explains a lot, doesn't it? The more you grow as a Christian, the more you see this is true. Did you know that when you signed on? Did anyone tell you this was how it would be?

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## **CONCLUSION:**

Of course, this depends upon our remembering something that is real and true. I heard an interview a few weeks ago with David Chapman, Professor of New Testament and Archeology at Covenant Seminary. He was asked about key discoveries and the value these can have ([READ](#)):

I often take groups from our seminary over to Israel and we try and catch up with some of the more recent excavations and such. And one interesting excavation, that's still ongoing, but one of the great finds made just in the last several years was a synagogue in a place called Magdala. This is on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's on a major road, a major trade route. It's the road that you would take if you're going from Nazareth to say Capernaum. And Magdala is famous because there's a lady in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene. And that "Magdalene" indicates that she's from Magdala. There's a synagogue that's been found there that is a first century synagogue. We know it's first century because it was destroyed when the Romans swept through in 70 AD. And so it was the synagogue that was there when Jesus was walking through the land. And of course Jesus goes from synagogue to synagogue. Magdala is not mentioned by name in the New Testament, but Jesus goes throughout Galilee and goes through the synagogues, and this has got to be one of the places he was. It's not super big—it's maybe twice the size of my bedroom at home—and so it's not large, but is this neat rectangle. It's got seating in the center, kind of all around the square, so you can see where the person would have stood or sat as they read Scripture and then spoke about it. And so it's just very vivid and brings back a sense of *This is the kind of structure that Jesus would have been in in his day*. And so that's one example right there.

Is that just a historical nugget to consider and forget? What about the geographical sites uncovered, the historical events corroborated, the customs confirmed, the names found recorded?

Why is this a big deal? "Remembering God's acts" assumes they are true, this didn't come out of thin air, they happened, that these are things that can be verified by both evidence and experience. Not only verified but believed. And not only believed but it can form the basis for life - if it's true. Well, it is. This is why remembering enables us to see, emboldens us to pray, and encourages us to live. A right looking to the past brings a right living in the present.

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