

Remember / Forget

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon teaches us to balance remembering and forgetting, focusing on what God wants us to remember and forget in order to have a good year.

Duration: 31:04

Scripture: Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 43:25, Romans 8:1, Philippians 3:13, Hebrews 8:12, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that according to the word of God, it is impossible for God to not give His followers a better new thing than before. He uses the example of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee to illustrate this point. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of forgetting past hurts and offenses in order to receive God's blessings in the present and future. He encourages the congregation to focus on being faithful to God and to trust that He will provide better things in the coming year.

Transcript

It's going to be determined to a great extent by how well we understand one of the great paradoxes in the Bible. The Bible is full of what's called paradoxes, things that are both true but they seem opposite. The Bible tells Christians that we're to rest in the Lord, but Paul says, I have run a good race.

Are we resting or we're running? We're doing both. Jesus is God. Jesus, one on earth, was God, Emmanuel, God with us, but he was a perfect man.

Well, was he man or was he God? He was God and he was man. There's many paradoxes like that. In fact, a friend of mine is writing a book on all the paradoxes of the Bible, things that are seemingly contrary on the surface but have great truth.

Here's a paradox that we find in some found one in Psalms and one in the New Testament. Philippians, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on. One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on.

Then in Psalm 77, verse 11, I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will what? I will remember.

I will remember forgetting those things that are behind. Well, which are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to be forgetting or are we supposed to be remembering? That paradox, those truths held together in attention is going to determine for all of us what kind of year we have in 2015. If we remember the things we should forget, it's going to be rough.

If we forget the things we should remember, it's not going to be good. So I want to speak just briefly about the challenge before all of us that the Bible teaches that it is hugely important that the choir here learns how to forget. What horrible experiences have come upon us because we don't know how to forget.

At the same time, you can miss out on God's blessing and the enemy can knock your feet out from under you if you don't understand the spiritual value of remembering. I've met people and counseled them by the droves. What's hurting them is either they're remembering things they should forget or they've forgotten things that God says, remember.

Here we have the paradox. Psalm 77, I will remember. Paul in Philippians 3, forgetting those things that are behind.

So let's talk about that for a second because it's going to determine our year. Oh yes, it will. Number one, let's look at what Paul is talking about.

Forgetting those things that are behind. How many Christians, how many people just in society, but then let's even go into the Christian realm, are held back because they can't forget. They can't forget.

They don't go to God and ask for the grace of forgetting. You remember that great name in the Old Testament that Joseph gave to his first son that was born in Egypt? You all know that story. Joseph had been through so much in life and his brethren tried to kill him, his own flesh and blood, and then he ended up in Egypt as a slave.

And then Potiphar's wife lied about him and he ended up in prison. Then he was forgotten in prison. But God still raised him up to the right hand of Pharaoh.

And when he married a woman who was the daughter of a priest in Egypt, he named his first child Manasseh because he understood what God had done. He said, I name him Manasseh, which sounds like in the Hebrew language to forget because he said, God has made me forget all the evil of my own household and all the things that people have done to me. Because if he would have been raised up to the right hand of Pharaoh and not have forgotten, I don't mean with an eraser taking away all the video cameras in his mind where he doesn't remember like amnesia, no.

The sting was taken out. Instead of remembering and resenting his brothers, instead of resenting Potiphar's wife, what he could have done is gone and hung her from some tree. And then he could have led a caravan back and wiped out every one of his brothers who sold them down the river.

But Joseph didn't do that. Why didn't he do that? Because he said, God made me forget. Notice what God did.

He can make us forget. As we go into the year, new year, let me tell you three things God wants you to forget. Are you ready? Number one, according to the teaching of scripture, you must learn to forget your sin.

How many people have been held back and live in condemnation and let the devil remind them over and over again of things that the blood of Jesus has washed away years ago and months ago, and they have been sold a bill of goods that to remember that and feel condemned and guilty and negative is some sign of spirituality. It has nothing to do with spirituality. What God forgets, he wants us to forget.

Do I get an amen? When God washes away your sin, God wants you to know that there's a double promise. As we said on Sunday about the new covenant, their sins, I will forgive, and their iniquities, I will remember what? No more. God has forgotten every wrong thing every one of us has done.

Not only forgiven us, but he has forgotten, and the devil is going to work overtime this next year to try to get us to remember things that God has said, forgetting those things that are behind. I'm going to forget my failures. I'm going to forget everything that Jesus has washed away because it will not help me.

It will not build me up. It will only drag me down into negativity and condemnation. How many are happy that God not only forgives, but he forgets every wrong thing we've ever done? Can you clap a little louder than that? Come on.

God has not only forgiven, he's forgotten, and that's what Paul was thinking about when he said forgetting those things that are behind because imagine what Paul could have started to remember. The persecution of Christians, killing Christians. Some of the commentators believed that he was guilty of killing hundreds, if not thousands possibly, of Christians.

We don't know. The Bible is silent, but how do you serve the Lord? How do you write letters that are going to be part of the New Testament if all you're thinking about are the Christians you killed before you came to faith? Ah, forgetting those things that are behind. Do you want a good year in 2015? Let's ask God to teach us what to forget.

See, some of you stumbled at that because you raised kind of like me around legalistic teaching that it's somehow good to remember things that God has forgotten. How could in the world could you remember something that God said he has forgotten? What edification could that be? That's how much he loves us. He wants our conscience clean.

He doesn't want us remembering the failures of yesterday. Praise his holy name. The other thing you got to forget, if you want a good year, you got to forget missed opportunities.

Every one of us in life, if we could relive our lives, we would do it different. Am I correct? Boy, 10 years ago, I should have made that decision. I never should have left that job.

I never should have moved. Man, why did I move? I never should have done this. You know what? I should have had a chance.

You know what? I knew God spoke to me in that meeting and said, try out for the choir or be in the prayer band or go on that mission trip. I missed it. And I think because I missed it, everything has gone out of whack and sideways ever since that moment.

All of us have regrets about things we've done in the past, decisions we've made. And you can so live with those regrets and remember them that you can miss the opportunity that's right up in your grill. How many people miss out on today's opportunity because they're going, man, back when I was little, why did I grow up in that church? Why'd my dad turn into being an alcoholic? Why, why, why? It's over.

And God has the ability to make all things work together for good to them that love God. Come on, can we say amen to that? We have to learn to forget, forgetting those things that are behind. What a spiritual gift it is to forget.

We don't think about it, but all the strong Christians have been great forgetters. They know how to forget their sins because they know. Now, look, if you haven't confessed it, you're still messing in it.

Don't forget. You got to deal with it. How many say amen? And I'm talking about things that are under the blood of Jesus Christ.

He's forgiven and forgotten. We have to. And all the missed opportunities and all the what ifs in life, you're going to miss.

Here's the question. What does God want you to do in 2015? Don't tell me what happened in 2008. That's ancient history.

Forgetting those things that are behind. Concentrate on what God wants you to do now. What opportunity is there now? What is he saying now? I don't care what you missed.

Get up. Say, I'm forgetting those things that are behind. I'm going to concentrate on God helping me to be faithful today.

One last thing. You got to forget, forgetting those things that are behind. You got to forget what people have done to you, what people have said about you, what people have stabbed you in the back.

You got to forget that. Listen, here's a sentence I believe from the Lord for you. If you don't forget what people have done to you in the past, you're going to lose out on what God wants to do for you in 2015.

How many people are missing out on what God has for them now? Missing out on joy? Missing out on peace? Why? Because they're running old DVD tapes, old CDs of who did what, who said what, she did, he said, she said. I can't believe they did that to me. My mother, if she was here today, she and I would just talk.

30 years ago or 35 years ago, there was a wedding among the family. She came from a large family. One of the sisters didn't like where she and her husband were seated at the wedding.

We're talking about it 20 years later. Cut off, listen, don't laugh. You've done it yourself.

Cut off contact. Stop talking to their own siblings because of a seat at a reception. Don't tell me the devil doesn't work over time to remember they did this, she said that, that minister, he was mean in that church and he did that.

If you keep remembering those things, you're going to miss out on what God has for you in 2015. It's a new day. Come on, praise God.

Can we put our hands together? It's a new day. That's old stuff. But the devil works overtime trying to get us to remember all that junk of our sins.

How many are happy that the blood of Jesus has cleansed us of all of our sins? How many are happy that whatever we messed up in the past and missed an opportunity, it's a new day and God's giving us another

chance? What if Peter would have spent his whole life saying, oh, I could deny them three times. I cursed the third time. What are you going to change? How are you going to change that? It's over.

It's done. You can't live with regret for past opportunities missed and you got to forget what people have done to you. Oh boy, I have lessons of that all through my life.

As a little kid, all the way up to as a pastor hearing people talk, they will blurt out something that happened in grade school, in a church 30 years ago. They don't forget. They don't forget.

Someone that my wife and I knew once felt that she had a prophetic word or was going to be exercising the gifts of the Spirit in a public meeting and she spoke out at a certain moment and the minister, happened before I was around to understand things, but the minister was there, shut her down and closed her down and said, hold steady, be quiet. You're not in the Spirit. You're out of order.

Never went back to church for 40 years. Now I wasn't there and maybe the minister, that sounds kind of rough as I heard it and he probably should have done it another way. And there's a lot of things you got to bear with in a service because people mean well, but we all make mistakes.

But the devil used that and reminded her of it every day. Never went back to church. Never took communion.

Couldn't forget. I'm so happy that when the Bible says, whom the son says free is free indeed, he can free us from our past and we can forget it. Come on, one last clap.

So you got that now? There's other things to forget. You know about it. Just go before the Lord this next first week of the year and go tonight, tomorrow, just say, Lord, show me the things I need to forget.

All kinds of people are held back. All kinds of attacks are made in our minds, starting with the speaker. Remember this.

Remember that. It's like a cursed, cursed, damnable attack of the enemy to get us to remember things that God says. Listen to Paul forgetting those things that are behind and press on now.

It's 2015. Wake up, smell the coffee. It's a new year.

It's a new year. How are you going to have a good new year if you're lamenting the last year? It is what it is. Now Psalm 77 gives us the other side of the paradox.

I will remember. Paul says forgetting those things that are behind, but the psalmist, the psalm says it's attributed in the subscription to Asaph, who was one of the worship leaders in the Old Testament time, right around the time of David. A psalm of Asaph.

And if you read Psalm 77, the guy is going through some really heavy waters. And in that psalm, he says things like, I can't sense God. It seems like God has forsaken me.

I'm worried. I'm nervous. I'm discouraged.

I'm having trouble sleeping at night. I shed tears and pray, but it doesn't seem like God answers. Read Psalm 77.

It's honest. He's going through what some people call the dark night of the soul. He's going through one of those passages in life where it seems not only has everyone left you, but the devil tells you that God has left you too.

So he's turning around and trying to find human encouragement. He can't get it. This, that, and the other, everything seems to fail.

And then he says this, what am I going to do? What am I going to do? I'm depressed. I'm down spiritually. I'm down mentally.

I'm down. Ah, I know how to get out of this. I will remember the great things God has done in the past.

Oh, will Satan try to block you from doing that? When he attacks us, he tries to make us forget every mercy, every answered prayer. Come on, how many know what I'm talking about? Every deliverance, every good thing that God has ever done. He tries to block your mind from it.

I had an attack on my mind one time when I was just in the ministry. Hadn't even come to, I don't think the Brooklyn tabernacle, maybe I had. And I was attacked up in an attic where I used to go and pray in this house we were living in, in Maplewood, New Jersey.

You talk about spiritual warfare. And I was in one of those situations, didn't know what to preach the next day. And I had just begun to preach.

Oh, my sermons were bad. Oh, they were bad. People, instead of getting converted, some of them were backsliding from my sermons.

That's how bad they were. So I'm up in that attic and I'm praying. And then I realized, wait a minute, there's a presence here.

There's a dark presence here. I'm feeling oppressed. I'm feeling like quitting.

I'm feeling like giving up. I haven't even had a year in the ministry and I just want to throw in the towel. Haven't you ever had attacks like that? Am I the only one? You're just all so spiritual that you're judging me right now? How many have had some attacks from the enemy in your life? Well, what I did was I thought of this.

I thought, no, I'm going to remember what God has done in the past. I'm going to remember when I got married and what God said at that wedding. And I'm telling you, an attack went in my mind.

It was like Satan was trying to make me lose the memory of anything God had ever done for me. So what I want to tell you tonight is I gave you three things to forget. Your sins, missed opportunities, and what people have done to you.

I want to give you three things as I close that God wants you to remember. No matter how hard it gets this year, now we're all up. We're all hyper.

We're praising God. We're going to blow up the building here in a little while. It's midnight.

We're going to celebrate and hug each other. But how many know every day of 2015 won't be like New Year's Eve? How many know that? I mean, you got to fight battles. So here's what you got to remember.

First of all, God is faithful. God is faithful. Say it with me.

God is faithful. I'm not asking about you. I'm not asking about your friends.

I don't care about who let you down. I want to tell you something that you got to remember every single day when before our feet hit the floor. We got to remember God is faithful.

Isn't it proof that God is faithful, that we're all here on New Year's Eve? Haven't we had some wars and letdowns and battles in this past year? How many are with me, right? And no matter how we have messed up, no matter how we failed, and not just once, repeatedly, and then making promises we wouldn't, and we didn't, and God is so faithful, we're all still here. He hasn't wiped out any of us. We're here in the land of the living.

We're praising God. The blood of Jesus has forgiven us of all of our sins. Why? Because we're good? No, because God is faithful.

Come on. Let's put our hands together. God is faithful.

God is faithful. God is faithful. Say it with me.

God is faithful. Tears might be for the night, but what? Joy is going to come in the morning. Joy has to come in the morning.

Why? Because God is faithful. Yeah, but Pastor Simba, do you understand this? And then I prayed, and I don't know. Listen, I don't understand a lot of stuff, but I know one thing.

God is faithful. God is faithful. Tie a knot and hang on.

God is faithful. Yeah, but it hurts. What can I tell you? Tie a knot and hang on.

God is going to come through. He's going to help you. Look at me.

He's going to help you. In 2015, He's going to prove to every one of us that He's faithful. Listen, He's going to prove this coming year, and you across the street, till there's like 1,200 of you across the street, I want to tell every one of you, God is faithful.

He's going to prove this year that He is faithful again and again and again. He can't deny Himself. He is faithful to His word.

Everyone else might leave you, forsake you, throw you overboard, but God will never let you go. He is faithful. Come on.

Is He faithful? Can we put our hands together? He is faithful. When the psalmist says, I will remember, that's one thing you got to remember. You got to preach to yourself.

God is faithful. You can't go by emotions. You got to go by what God's word says.

Don't judge God's word by your emotions. Judge your emotions by God's word. Don't judge God's word by your emotions.

Judge your emotions by God's word. And when you're down, and you're feeling like you're sinking, say like the psalmist does, oh my soul, what is wrong with you? Get up. Praise God.

He's faithful. He will come through. What are you down for? God's not down.

God is up. The promises of God are yea and amen and Christ Jesus. God is faithful.

There's not one of us here in this building and no Christian who's ever lived that can say, God let me down. God is faithful. You got to say it and remember it.

God is faithful. And no matter who hurts you or shuns you this year, you got to remember fact number two. Not only is God is faithful, but remember that God loves, and this is hard for some of us because we didn't grow up in atmospheres of love.

God loves you and me more than we can ever imagine. God loves me. Yeah, but Pastor Simba, I know you.

You're not so hot. I agree with you, but he still loves me. Aren't you happy he loves you? It's unconditional.

You got to remember that every single day. He's faithful and he loves me. And the devil will give you 11 reasons within 10 seconds why he doesn't love you.

And every one of them is a lie. He loves you because he is love. He doesn't love you because of who you are.

He loves you because he is love. 2000 years ago, before any of you were born, he sent his son to die for us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

After shedding his blood and taking the blows on us for the cross, do you think God after giving his son is not going to love us and help us in 2015? I don't care how it looks. Listen to me. There will be moments of battle.

You got to remember now. He is faithful. He will not fail me.

I don't care how it seems, how it looks. God is faithful. And I know this.

He loves me more than I can imagine. Not because of who I am. Satan, don't try to make it so that I have to earn his love.

He loves me. Before I was born, he loved me. He's going to take care of you this year.

He's going to show his love to you. If you could just trust him. Stick out your hand and hold it.

Let him hold your hand and just hang on and keep saying to yourself, though a thousand demons tell you otherwise, he is faithful and he loves me. He loves you. I don't know how you were raised.

I don't know who loved you, didn't love you. I don't know who stabbed you in the back. I don't know who walked out on you.

But I know one thing. He loves you. I don't care who's turning their knife in you and has rejected you and shuns you and is angry at you.

It doesn't matter what they're doing. I'm telling you, he loves you. He loves you.

Can you receive that? He loves you. Remember that every single day. When all the clapping and celebration is over, remember in those difficult moments, he is faithful and he loves me.

He is faithful and he loves me. These two things I know. He is faithful.

He will never fail me and he loves me. I don't care what you've done. I don't care how many times you've done it.

He loves you. Pastor Simba, if you preach that way, then people will just do whatever they want and they'll go crazy. No, just the opposite.

When you know that he loves you, that love will break your heart and you'll want to serve him like you've never served him before in this year. Am I right? Do I get an amen here? That's what draws us to God, not his threats, his love. So remember that he's faithful.

Yeah, but you ... No, stop with the but. He's faithful and he loves you. But I don't even love myself.

That could be, but he loves you. Lastly, let's go over it because there's going to be a test at the end of the week here on this. What are three things to forget? Our sins, missed opportunities.

Number three, what people have done to us, said about us, including your mother and your father. Three things to remember. God is faithful.

Say it with me. God is faithful. Lift your hand up and say it.

God is faithful. God is faithful. God loves me.

God loves me. Now the last one, the best is yet to come. Amen.

I don't care. Listen, you ever hear people talk, how was 2014? Was it a good year, a bad year, and all of that? I want to tell you something. According to the word of God and every promise that's in here, it's impossible for God to not give you a better new thing than he gave you before, because the Bible says he doesn't deteriorate.

He doesn't lessen the blessing. He increases the blessing. Remember when the water was changed to wine in his first miracle in Cana of Galilee? He took the water and he changed it to wine, and then the wine was served, and then the head of the banquet said, didn't know what had happened, didn't know that this wine had been water a few moments ago.

He said, you know what? I've never seen anything like this. Everybody else, when they serve wine at a wedding, they put the best wine first, and then after everybody's feeling a little juiced, they bring on the weaker wine, and nobody even knows. What is it? Root beer? Whatever.

I'm just going to have some. He says, but you know what? You've saved the best for last. How many had a good year in 2014? God helped you.

How many good year? How many believe by lifting both your hands, 2015's going to be better? How many believe it? Of course it's going to be better. Would God say, no, I love you, so I'm going to go a little less this year. No, no, no.

Massy mass. Every year better, every day. Will you remember those things? Please, I wanted to give you something to chew on, something to hang on to in the storms of life.

God is faithful. God loves me desperately. He gave his son for me, and the best is yet to come.

You know, the Lord helped us a lot in 2014 here as a church, but it's going to be better in 2015. We got good missionary reports. Good things happen.

Some of the churches that we started, they're going to be better in 2015. In Connecticut, in New Hampshire, around the city, in Bermuda, in Dominican Republic, it's going to be better. If we'll just believe God and hang on, it's going to get better and better and better and better.

You know, that's true here. I close with my mom. She's closer to God now at 100 than she ever was before.

My sister even said to me, Jim, have you noticed mom has a better sense of humor now than she had when we were growing up? I said, you know, that's true. Mom had no sense of humor when I was little, and now she has a sense of humor. She's rejoicing.

She's praying. You don't have to get older and go down. You can get older and go up.

God's plan is from glory to glory and from strength to strength. Come on. That's what God has promised.

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Happy New Year!

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