

Blessings or Bitterness: Which Will You Choose?

Three years ago this month, my husband received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

Two years ago this month, the doctor told him his prognosis was terminal.

For me, January will always be associated with these events.

For better or for worse, our need to remember is deeply rooted in our nature. But the act of remembrance can lead to one of two outcomes: gratitude or bitterness.

The God who created us knows our deepest needs, including our need to remember. But because He knows us so intimately, He knows we have to be intentional about remembering the *right* things for the *right* reasons. So all through the Bible, we see passages that speak about remembering His blessings. Consider these verses from the ESV translation:

–Deuteronomy 8:2 – “You shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness.”

–Psalm 77:11 – “I will remember the deeds of the Lord.”

–Psalm 103:2 – “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

–Psalm 119:55 – “I remember your name in the night, O Lord, and keep your law.”

–Ecclesiastes 12:1 – “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth.”

–Isaiah 46:9 – “Remember the former things of old; for I am

God, and there is no other.”

—1 Corinthians 11:24 – “When he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’”

Such reminders help us combat the “What have you done for me lately?” syndrome.

Regardless of whether a person is good or evil, a follower of Jesus Christ or not, God allows His sun to rise on all people and sends rain for the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). We all delight in the beauty of the natural world: rainbows, butterflies, sunrises and sunsets. We enjoy relationships with family and friends and have the convenience of material comforts.

Those who are Christians have the added benefit of knowing the pleasures of this world are merely shadows of eternal life. This world is not as good as it gets—there’s a better one coming. And Christians have the added resource of the Holy Spirit to encourage us, prompt our recollections and comfort us.

Still, if we’re not careful, even Christians can fall into the trap of forgetting God’s past blessings in light of current suffering. We can develop a bad habit of rehearsing negative events and emotions instead of focusing on God’s goodness. And we can become stuck in dwelling on who and what we’ve lost instead of who and what we still have.

It’s not easy, but followers of Christ have a choice. Wallow in self-pity or move forward by trusting God’s faithfulness for what’s to come.

Which will you choose? {eoa}

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