

Do you like history? Do you like to reminisce? Some of us are more given to looking back. For others, contemplating days gone by is less stimulating. The oldest church in Athens, built in 1050 AD, is “Panagi Kapnikarea”. From this church has come the colloquial phrase, “that is as Kapnikarea”!

Today we are combining **remembering** and **thanking** = **thanksmembering**. You will have an opportunity to participate – take a plate and pen – please jot down the goodness of God in your life over the past year.

Proposition

Last week we saw an important Biblical pattern: God invites us into challenging engagement, yet He also invites us to rest in Him. An example of the need for healthy pace is the prophet Elijah. I just want to revisit the list I gave last Sunday for “redeeming the time”. A **seed cleaning screen** provides a picture of filtering.

Is it wrong?
avoid it altogether

Is it neutral?
weigh it carefully

Is it good?
do it as God directs

Is it eternal?
guard it earnestly

In our series on James, we noted Alistair Begg’s comment that “*the imperatives flow from the infinitives.*” (see more at [Truth For Life](#)). There are 54 **imperatives** in James (“do” or “do not”). Complying with these commands means knowing who we are in Christ. These are the **infinitives** (“to be” or “you are”) – see **Colossians 1:1-3**.

Today we conclude our series, **important things**. So far, we have considered the importance of the **next generation**, **death’s defeat**, **the above things**, **living in Christ**, and **healthy pace**.

There is one more important thing to consider: **remembering and returning**. We can see this in the history of the nation of Israel. We especially see this in the formative years of the nation. Think of what it must have been like to be the generation that grew up in the wilderness wandering. In your lifetime you would have experienced the journey from the Exodus to the land of promise.

As God’s people, they experienced God’s hand of deliverance, His preservation, and some amazing victories. The nation of Israel also provides believers today with many cautionary examples. Consider two.

- **Judges 2:8-12** – following the death of **Joshua** generation grew up that **forsook God**. This was more than lack of acquaintance with God’s work. The key term is in verse 12 – “abandon” or “forsake”.
- **Judges 8:32-35** – following the death of **Gideon**, Israel **forgot God** (“*did not remember*” v.24). This resulted in transferring their loyalty from God and His appointed leader to the “*Baals*” (false gods).

God used both leaders in powerful ways to lead Israel in His purposes. However, a tragic pattern in Israel’s history is seen in both examples: **crisis → rescue → victory → blessing → forget**. F. Duane Lindsey argues, “*this was more than just a cycle; it was also a descending spiral*” which is expressed by “*even more corrupt*” in verse 19. Lindsey suggests: **sin → servitude → supplication → salvation → silence**. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary OT*, Walvoord & Zuck, eds., Victor Books, 1988, 383)

As discouraging as these accounts may be, the truth is that followers of Jesus are all too personally familiar with this pattern! In the Word of God, we find **two important actions** to counter this tragic tendency.

[1] Remember

Fifteen times in the book of Deuteronomy God called His people to remember! Primarily, it was to recall their rescue and redemption from slavery. This must be a key remembrance for believers today! Like Israel, we must remember the provision of our relationship with God – and the privileges and responsibilities which come with such a relationship.

We can never fully comprehend the heart of God in His work of redemption. However, it is important that we see His ways are corrective and compassionate, not just commanding! *“I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.”* (Exodus 6:7). Consider three reminders of the responsibility to **remember!**

*And you shall **remember** that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to celebrate the Sabbath day.* (Deuteronomy 5:15)

*And you shall **remember** all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, in order to humble you, putting you to the test, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.* (Deuteronomy 8:2)

*For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in a hurry), so that you will **remember** the day when you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.* (Deuteronomy 16:3)

This Thanksgiving Sunday I hope that you have “served up some thanksmembering” on your plate! We are now going to collect these into a “basket of blessings”. Read/pray for some.

[2] Return

We can put a sharp point on the next step. When we see the call to “*return to the Lord*” in the Old Testament, it is the command to **repent**. We know from John 16:8 that it is the Holy Spirit who “*will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.*” Because of His work in the human heart, repentance or the “*abandonment of sin*” occurs (***Christian Theology***, Millard Erickson, Baker, 1983, 872)

*For if you **return** to the Lord, your brothers and your sons will find compassion in the presence of those who led them captive, and will return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him.* (II Chronicles 30:9)

*And the redeemed of the Lord will **return** and come to Zion with joyful shouting, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.* (Isaiah 35:10)

*“**Return**, you faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness.” “Behold, we come to You; For You are the Lord our God.* (Jeremiah 3:22)

*“Come, let’s **return** to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.* (Hosea 6:1)

We often need a “lighthouse moment”. You may have heard the story of a ship’s captain who detected something in his ship’s way. The captain signaled, “*alter your course 15°N to avoid a collision.*” The answer came back, “*alter your course 15°S!*” This went back and forth a few times. Exasperated, the captain signaled, “*Alter your course, I’m a battleship!*” The answer came back, “*Alter your course, I’m a lighthouse!*”

True repentance occurs when one is **convinced** by the Holy Spirit, **acknowledges** his or her sin, and **turns way** from that path. This is God’s work which brings joy and freedom to our lives – and **thanksmembering**.

Isaiah 61:3 assures, “*...unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.*” Note it well – we are given beauty, not duty, for ashes!

Conclusion – See Digging Deeper

What is Thanksgiving if it is not a festival of **remembering!**? And if we are doing the remembering in a meaningful manner, there will also be the **freedom** and **joy** which comes from returning to the Lord! We are going to continue to look into our “basket of blessings” at our **Worship & Prayer** night this Wednesday.