Do *You* Remember?

Memorials are erected in stone. Towers are built. Admonishing cries of “Remember!” and “Never forget!” are shouted so that the next generation will appreciate, learn, and be motivated. It is easy to forget and not appreciate what came before us and brought us to where we are, but we are foolish if we forget what God tells us to remember.

After nearly forty years of wandering and complaining in the wilderness, the faithless generation of Israel which God had rescued from bondage in Egypt was virtually gone. Those who were teens and younger at the time of the Exodus were now in their forties and fifties. The only aged men among them were Moses, Joshua, and Caleb (cf. Num. 14:27-34; 26:64,65), and not even Moses would get to enter the Promised Land (Dt. 1:35-38). Indeed, from this time forward, subsequent generations of Israelites were admonished to remember the period of the wilderness wandering.

Even before the children of Israel crossed into the Promised Land, Moses charged, *“*And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (8:2). God humbled them, tested them, taught them, loved them, and provided for them so that they would know “that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him” (vv. 5,6). Remembering this was crucial because God was going to bless them richly. “When you have eaten and are full,” there are two possible responses: praising God for His blessings (v. 10) or forgetting that God is the source of blessings (vv. 11-16) and thinking, “My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth” (v. 17).

Success and prosperity will spoil the generation that has not known adversity and fails to remember God as the one from whom all blessings flow. Those who forget or deny God have a distorted view of their own self-worth which causes them to view wealth as an entitlement rather than a gracious blessing to be used to God’s glory. God—whose power is such that He can do and give all things and still have more to give—has demonstrated time and again that because He *can* give does not mean that He *will* give. He knows what is best, what we need, and what we don’t need. Thus, God may intentionally deprive us of our wants and perceived needs in order to form us into what we were created to be—something better than we are or otherwise would be.

Parents, do you practice intentional deprivation in order to build character in your children? If you provide your children with all that you are capable of giving them, they do not learn the godly characteristics of self-denial, sacrifice, and the kind of love that undergirds those virtues. When blessings are seen as rights *or* something earned or deserved, we become arrogant and forget God. The blessed of any generation *must* humbly recognize they are blessed by God’s grace or they will inevitably raise up children and grandchildren that know neither God nor His grace.

Israel did not inherit the Promised Land because of its righteousness. Israel received the land because of God’s gracious promises (9:3-6). Israel’s remembering of their forefathers’ complaining and rebellion in the wilderness was critical to appreciating God’s grace (vv. 7-24). Subsequent generations of Israelites were reminded as well (e.g. Psalms 95, 78, 106; Ezek. 20). Acknowledging God’s grace is essential to being humble, and being humble is essential to receiving more grace (Prov. 3:34/Js. 4:6). We must remember that the events in the wilderness ultimately point to Jesus as God’s grace to each of us in our sojourns. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands [on his own] take heed [remember] lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:1-12).