Lest We Forget

We are a forgetting as well as a forgetful people. In this regard, we are not unique; we stand in the pitiful tradition of our foreparents who needed to be constantly reminded by God to keep him and his glorious work of his redemption in the forefront of their minds and motives. Thus, when the children of Israel were about to enter into the Promised Land, they were urgently admonished to remember: that they were slaves in Egypt whence the Lord redeemed them with "a mighty hand and an outstretched arm," Dt 5:15; 15:15; 24: 18, 22; cf. 16:3:12; the Lord's judgment upon Pharaoh and all Egypt, 7:18; the Lord's testing their faithfulness in their wilderness journeys, 8:2; that it was he alone gave them the power to accumulate wealth, v.18; his long-suffering with their frequent provocations in the wilderness, 9:7 (this they were "to remember and forget")- see also 24:9; the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 9:27; the days of old in which the Lord sovereignly elected his people unto himself, 32:7.

In spite of all of these warnings, Israel forgot the Lord their God and ".did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals." Jdg 2:11; 3:7; etc. They quickly forgot the Lord and his redemptive work on their behalf and fell into worsening patterns of continuing sin, from which the Lord yet saved them to the glory of his holy Name! Israel's life was marked by an unsavory note of faithlessness to their redeeming Triune God. How are we just like Israel!

Forgetfulness of the Lord and his persistent grace towards us in Christ, however, is not a function of a weak memory. It is not produced by attacks of the Alzheimer's disease. It is not an effect of old age. Rather, it is the fruit of a depraved heart. In Rom 1:18-21 the apostle Paul tells us that ingratitude is the foundation of fallen man's willful and prideful rejection of God's overtures to him in creation. He further states that this thanklessness, combined with futile thinking flowing from darkened hearts, eventually leads to him committing the most fundamental sin of all, idolatry, vv. 22-25.

It is no wonder then that the New Testament overflows with urgent admonitions for God's people to commit themselves to the faithful act of remembering. For example, the Lord Jesus cautions us to remember: Lot's wife, Lk 17:32, lest we be overtaken by the deceitfulness of the world and turn away from him completely; that, in his Person and substitutionary, atoning sacrificial offering of himself, he fulfills all Scripture, 24:24-27, 44-47.

Also, Paul reassures the church at Corinth that faithful partaking of the Lord's Supper is a covenant activity that is to be done in remembrance of Christ's saving work, 1 Cor 11:23-24. He later tells the Ephesians to remember that Christ had reconciled them to God and to one another, Eph 2:11-12. Towards the end of his life, he
impresses upon Timothy the need to "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, .." 2 Tim 2:8.

Lastly, down to the end of recorded history, the Lord firmly instructs the troubled Ephesian church that genuine repentance requires in the first place, a dutiful remembrance of their previous spiritual fervor and commitment, Rev 2:5, and then he commands the church at Sardis to "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent..." 3:3.

The reason that the Scripture is flooded with such directives is that we are a forgetting and a forgetful people. Although regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we still have remnants of the old nature competing against the Spirit. This ongoing struggle will continue until Christ comes again or until we die, whichever comes first. We are still prone to be deluded by the world; lulled into carnal security; devoted to leisure; neglectful of our duties; selfish in our service; idolatrous in our worship; etc. In short, we are continually forgetful of the Lord and his goodness towards us.

Lest we forget, let us venture behind and beyond the joyful celebrations of this year's Thanksgiving to see the hand of the gracious and generous God who has given us everything that we need, both in this life and in the life to come, in Jesus Christ.

Lest we forget, let us remember that, far outstripping the delicious, assorted servings of turkey, dressing, ham, vegetables, cakes, pies, laughter and football, the Lord has given us an incomparable feast in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lest we forget, let us always remember that all the material, temporal blessings that we have from our Lord, however much in quantity; sizable in portions; frequent in occurrence; varied in color, form, size, and shape; satisfying to the body and mind; rich in value; surprising in their presence; and so on, they all pale deplorably when compared with the inexpressible gift of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world and the desire of the nations.

Lest we forget, that we, upon whom the end of the ages has come, have a most enjoyable, eternal gift that is not seasonal.

Lest we forget, let us remember that our chief purpose and our highest virtue in life are to glorify our Triune God and to enjoy him, not only on Thanksgiving Day, but forever and ever. Amen.