

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

47. On Forgetfulness of God

How awful is the declaration of the royal Psalmist! "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Sin is a dreadful evil, under whatever guise it may appear; whether in the loose attire of wickedness, in the brazen armor of profaneness, in the fringed garment of pharisaical pride, or in the rough clothing of sanctimonious austerity. Sin is an infinite evil, whose extent cannot be measured; its malignant nature may be ascertained by the poisonous fruits which it daily produces in the world; and by those tremendous denunciations of wrath, which are revealed against it in the word of God.

But if we would learn what an evil and bitter thing sin really is, we must go to Mount Calvary, and there contemplate the amazing price which Jesus, the eternal Son of God, paid to infinite Justice for our redemption, when he himself became the High Priest—the Victim—and the Altar.

"Oh blessed Savior! give me faith to behold this great sight with a broken, believing, grateful heart. Enable me to look unto you and live; yes, to take shelter in you as in a rock of safety; and while, like Moses, I stand in the cleft of the rock, may I view by faith all your goodness pass before me, and hear your gracious name proclaimed in accents of love."

The wicked and all who forget God shall be turned into hell. What a large portion of mankind does this embrace. Awfully tremendous thought! The profligate, and the comparatively amiable and moral who forget God, are here classed together.

The Scripture meaning of the term forget, is not a total failure of the recollection respecting the being of a God, but a practical disregard of his presence and authority; it is living without God in the world; acting as if he either saw not, or heeded not, the conduct of his moral creatures. Those who now forget his omniscience, shall before long be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. All his perfections, his slighted mercies, his violated laws, and his abused Gospel, shall be eternally glorified in their destruction. Oh! my soul, flee to the mountain, escape for your life, tarry not in, all the plain, look not behind you, linger not, lest you be consumed.

How happy are they who love to meditate upon God, and to whom the Lord manifests his mercy! "A book of remembrance is kept before him of those who think upon his name." "They shall be mine, says the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Believers are the Lord's jewels; they are precious in his sight; they are his peculiar treasure, being the purchase of his own most precious blood. They delight themselves in the Lord, in his perfections, promises, commands, and ordinances, and are filled with the abundance of peace. Oh! that I may have an increasing evidence of my interest in Jesus, by thus delighting in him, and loving him above every created good!

If forgetfulness of God be so heinous a sin, as in the very nature of things it must be; then, how important it is to have right views and feelings respecting our obligations to our Almighty Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. The divine command, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth," forms the basis of happiness; but the divine lamentation, "My people have forgotten me days without number," proves us to be children of the fall.

Everything in religion depends upon the right state of the heart! If the main-spring be wrong, the whole movement of the machine must be in disorder. In Scripture, we find how great a stress is laid by him who looks at the heart, on the inward principle. The motive must be pure, or the work is hateful in his sight. Faith working by love, is the Gospel spring of action. This is beautifully set forth by Paul, in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, where he produces the most interesting witnesses to the power and efficacy of faith.

Though millions of wretched sinners forget God, in the midst of their pleasures and pursuits; yet, in every age, he has had a people to show forth his praise. God never left himself without witnesses. The apostle speaks of them as "a great cloud of witnesses:" and in the heavenly world, John, when wrapped in sacred vision, beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

That unconverted people should habitually live in a forgetfulness of the Savior, is not incredible. They have no love to Jesus, and therefore their thoughts never dwell upon him. But that his people should so much forget him; that they should live so little under the abiding influence of his presence; that they should be so carried away with the trifles of time, to the sinful neglect of eternity; is truly painful. Nothing can more fully testify to the power of that sin which dwells in us, or prove more forcibly the continual necessity for watchfulness and prayer, than this criminal forgetfulness of our Almighty Friend and Savior.

The best preservative against the evil of forgetfulness, is a heartfelt compliance with the Redeemer's command: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." If the glory of God be our first and chief concern; if our most anxious desire be that of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but you, and there is none upon earth I desire beside you;" if Jesus is precious to us, and all else esteemed as nothing when compared with him; then like Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, we shall walk before God with a perfect heart, upright and sincere; then like

Moses, we shall endure as seeing him who is invisible; and like David, we shall set the Lord always before us. With the apostles, we shall then do all to the glory of God; and our whole desire and aim will be, that "Christ may be magnified in our bodies, whether it be by life or death."

Such is the sacred purpose of the true believer. His aim is high; yet he deeply deplores those inbred sins which prevent his constant elevation. He resembles a bird, to whose foot a stone is tied. He struggles to ascend, but feels the gravitating force of nature. Yet grace enables him to rise above the level of the world, and to soar higher and higher towards the heavenly regions.

Not so the generality of mankind. Most men die as they live. An awful forgetfulness marks their lives, and a stupid unconcern their deaths. If conscience should perchance be heard amid the clamor of a thousand lusts, each panting for gratification, Satan, too crafty to deny the claims of conscience, whispers the pacifying expedient in the sinner's ear, "a death bed repentance". Thus Satan lulls his fears to rest; well knowing that the heart increases in its hardness by delay, and feels the less inclined to repent, in proportion as it defers repentance.

"Lord, deliver me from this delusion of the artful enemy. Keep my conscience awake. Enable me to seek first your kingdom of grace; that, at death, I may be admitted into your kingdom of glory, through the merits of my Redeemer."

Why is my heart so wayward grown,
So prone to start aside?
Where are the joys and comforts flown,
Which once my God supplied?
Have his redeeming mercies ceased
In copious streams to flow?
Why are his judgments now increased,
To fill my heart with woe?
Alas! a cold, deceitful heart
Has grieved the Holy Dove;
My sins have said—Arise, depart;
And now I mourn his love.
Dark and deserted is my soul;
I hear the lion roar;
Lord, make a trembling sinner whole,
Who lies at mercy's door.
In pity listen to my moan,
Return with pardoning grace;
Oh! take away this heart of stone
And you shall have the praise.