

**Wilmore Free Methodist Church
Sunday, August 26, 2012, 6 p.m.**

Dr. Timothy L. Thomas

**REMEMBER
*1 Corinthians 13:5***

Responsive reading #661 (1 Corinthians 13)

In our many travels to the northland, we must needs pass by Dry Ridge just south of Cincinnati. I have had a bad attitude toward Dry Ridge for a while because on one of our return trips many years ago, our 1978 Oldsmobile Custom Cruiser station-wagon blew the water pump and overheated in a big way. We had to stay there in Dry Ridge that Saturday night, and then get someone to come and rescue us. The station wagon's engine was never the same after that and we soon had to dispose of that wonderful vehicle.

So . . . I almost always think about that experience as I pass by Dry Ridge. And trust that my current car will not repeat that experience of 1986. In recent years the opening of a Dairy Queen at Dry Ridge improved the status of Dry Ridge in my mind and provided some R and R on our homeward trips. But sadly that Dairy Queen has gone the way of all flesh in the recent recession.

Now you see, I remember too much.

Our text is:

(1 Cor 13:5 NIV) [Love] . . . is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Specifically the phrase: "Love . . . keeps no record of wrongs."

The King James gives us the phrase "thinks no evil".

In that "thinking" sense the passage means. Matthew Clarke comments that love . . . "never supposes that a good action may have a bad motive; . . . the person's heart is so governed and influenced by the love of God, that he cannot think of evil but where it [actually] appears."

Numerous other versions focus more on the Greek word (λογίζομαι, *logizomai*) which seems to emphasize taking an inventory, estimating, imputing, calculating, numbering, and reckoning. It is a word with some kinship to our modern term "logistics."

It thus gets translated in a variety of ways such as:

does not count up wrongs that have been done. (NCV)
 does not keep track of other people's wrongs. (NIRV)
 does not remember the suffering that comes from being hurt by someone. (NLV)
 does not remember wrongs done against it. (ERV)
 doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. (CEV)
 doesn't keep track of wrongs. (GW)
 doesn't keep a record of complaints, (CEB)
 keeps no account of wrongs, (MOUNCE)
 keeps no record of being wronged. (NLT)

I am going to use: "Love . . . keeps no record of wrongs."

1.0 WE ALL HAVE A RECORD

Academics and law enforced types sometimes talk about "your permanent record." If you do not behave and you do bad things, or do poorly in school, the threat is that these facts will be entered into your "permanent record."

Sometimes the permanent record included rather sad or pessimistic comments about students and their current or anticipated future behavior. Some of these became determiners and limiters of their future opportunities.

Just think of various records: report cards, medical records, fingerprints, tax and financial records, ledger books, little black books, credit reports, court records, and on it goes.

I went back and read some of my report cards just to get ready for this -- they reveal a record of bad handwriting in primary school and poor German in high school.

Some people live up to their report cards and some overcome them.

All of these have a bearing on our happiness, our health, our health, our opportunities for advancement and success, and our relationships.

The existence of these records can be a source of fear or pride or probably both.

And that does not even account for God's records about us.

In this political season, there is a constant preoccupation with digging up the past in order to embarrass the future. Should there be a statute of limitations?

What do other people have stored away in their "records" about us? Something we said or did even inadvertently?

Our text says: "Love . . . keeps no record of wrongs."

How can that be? Is such a stance really possible? Is this a human possibility?

1. Whose “wrongs”? Other people’s wrongs, or my own?
2. What kind of “records”?

Mostly we are talking here about “wrongs” done to us. But it could also be “wrongs” that we have done to others or ourselves. Either way we need a good dose of forgetting.

We generally assume that remembering is good and forgetting is bad but the opposite may be true. Forgetting may be good and remembering may be bad.

Obviously we have to be discerning. There are things we need to remember and not forget.

2.0 WE NEED TO REMEMBER SOME THINGS

A couple of examples:

2.1 A hymn by Jennie Evelyn Hussey

*Lest I forget Gethsemane,
Lest I forget Thine agony;
Lest I forget Thy love for me,
Lead me to Calvary.*

2.2 “For the Fallen” a poem from World War I by Laurence Binyon

Last stanza:

*They shall grow, . . . not old, . . . as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, . . . nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

We need to remember the example of those who have gone on before us.

2.3 Then there is the general confession from our communion liturgy which seems to suggest that we are to remember our record of sins

“. . . we confess that we have sinned, and we deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives.” (*The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration*, page 759)

Questions that come to mind: Does this mean our sins for all time or just recent sins since the last confession? How long should we remember these sins? How long is a confession effective? Since the last confession? Or, are we starting over with a clean slate?

2.4 We need to note that the communion is a service of remembering:

(Luke 22:19-20 NIV) And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." {20} In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

The communion service includes this most encouraging and transforming sentence: "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life."

In this new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (and cited in Hebrews), God says that his law will be written on people's hearts and he will remember their sins no more:

(Jer 31:33-34 NIV) "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. {34} No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

This new covenant celebrated in the communion is a time when God provides forgiveness and remembers our sins no more.

2.5 "Often in life we forget the things we should remember and remember the things we should forget" (Unknown). We need to remember the good that has been done to us and for us by parents, and other mentors.

Right now I am re-reading "On the Irrawaddy" by G. A. Henty. It is an adventure story about the wars in Burma during the 1800's . This was a gift to me from my school principal, Mr. Bernard Cosford when I was 10 years old.

He saw some merit in me and trusted me with that special gift.

3.0 WE NEED TO FORGET SOME THINGS

3.1 Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there
If you would trust Him and never doubt
He would surely bring you out
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there
--Washington Phillips

3.2 St. Paul suggest forgetting: (Phil 3:13-14 NIV) Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward

what is ahead, {14} I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

3.3 Should we not be forgetting the sins of our past lives?

What about the consequence of sin?

What should we remember and what should we forget?

What does God remember and what does he forget?

3.4 Can forgetting be a gift? Or, can it be a command?

The passive voice of 1 cor 12:31

(1 Cor 12:31 NIV) But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

. . . seems to imply something that is done for us. We are shown the more excellent way. The more excellent way of love may be the way of forgetting.

4.0 WE NEED TO KNOW THAT REMEMBERING BAD THINGS CREATES TROUBLE

4.1 BITTERNESS

(Eph 4:30-32 NIV) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. {31} Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. {32} Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

(Eph 5:1-2 NIV) Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children {2} and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

4.2 VINDICTIVE, SPITEFUL, HURTFUL

One-up-man-ship and competition

the art or practice of achieving, demonstrating, or assuming superiority in one's rivalry with a friend or opponent by obtaining privilege, status, status symbols, etc.

I can do you one better

Early on in life in primary school, I met some kids who always could tell one better. If I had been on a hike, they had done it twice. If I had gone swimming, they had been there three times; I just decided that they were lying and moved on.

Sometimes, re-telling a story over and over; embellishing it along the way, it can grow and the person being talked can take on the negative characteristics of the story.

4.3 PREOCCUPATION AND OBSESSION

Paul writes: (Acts 26:11 NIV) Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

There is a burden, a weight of carrying all these bad memories.

Moses: (Num 11:14 NIV) I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.

4.0 WE NEED TO WORK ON FORGETTING THINGS

Some people are just better at forgetting than others.

We have to move on

Someone gave me a sign for my desk: "Get over it"

One suggestion is to visualize walking through a door way

We need to get rid of stuff (Jim Reeves sings the words by Alex Zanetis)

*Yeah I'm gonna change everything that holds a mem'ry of you oh yeah
I'm gonna start with the wall
[take] the pictures off the wall and burn 'em
Move the chairs around
take the window curtains down and burn 'em
Everything I see reminds me you were here*

*Yeah I'm gonna change everything that holds a mem'ry of you oh yeah
Take the carpet off the floor
throw it out the door it's filled with tears
Everything I find that brings you to my mind must disappear*

Yeah I'm gonna change everything that holds a mem'ry of you oh yeah

Stay away from places with bad memories

Driving home another way

Rise above it

Avoiding the triggers

Avoiding the use of such terms as “ever” and “never” in conversation with others especially one’s spouse; avoid saying you have been doing that for “40 years”

Youth service – throwing paper with sins on it into a fire (fire cracker incident)

Role of forgiveness in forgetting

Sometimes we remember stuff that never happened or at least the intention we attributed to the behavior never happened. We should not presume that we can read another person’s mind, his or her intentions

On a lot of this we need a continual “reality check”. Maybe the person that you think slighted you is not even thinking about you.

6.0 WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO WORK ON THIS AND NOT TO BLAME OUR FAMILIES AND OTHERS ASSOCIATES FOR OUR MEMORIES

The 10 Commandments tell us: (Exo 20:5-6 NIV) You shall not bow down to [idols] or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, {6} but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Ezekiel however moves our understanding ahead when he says:

(Ezek 18:2-4 NIV) "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? {3} "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. {4} For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

Ezekiel says that we are not to blame parents, or hold our inheritance responsible for everything that happens to us. We are the responsible ones.

7.0 WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY ON THIS TOPIC?

7.1. AVOID DISCONTENT

There is a spirit of discontent that keeps us stuck in the past and keeps us from moving on. A good example is that of the Israelites:

(Num 11:5-6 NIV) We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost--also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. {6} But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

7.2 LEAVE THE IDOLATRY OF THE PAST

(Isa 42:8-10 NIV) "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. {9} See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you." {10} Sing to the LORD a new song, . . .

7.3 ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, BE ALIVE IN CHRIST

As Paul writes:

(Col 2:13-14 NIV) When you were dead in your sins . . . , God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, {14} having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

7.4 FORGIVE OTHERS AND FORGIVE MYSELF

(Psa 32:1-2 NIV) Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. {2} Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Psalm 32 is quoted by Paul in (Rom 4:8 NIV) Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

7.5 BE RECONCILED TO GOD AND OTHERS

(2 Cor 5:18-19 NIV) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: {19} that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

8.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1.0 WE ALL HAVE A RECORD

2.0 WE NEED TO REMEMBER SOME THINGS

3.0 WE NEED TO FORGET SOME THINGS

4.0 WE NEED TO KNOW THAT REMEMBERING BAD THINGS CREATES TROUBLE

5.0 WE NEED TO WORK ON FORGETTING SOME THINGS

6.0 WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO WORK ON THIS AND NOT TO BLAME OUR FAMILIES AND OTHERS ASSOCIATES FOR OUR MEMORIES

7.0 WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY ON THIS TOPIC?

9.0 CONCLUSION

Probably the most powerful statement on this topic comes from the Psalms, where we read:

(Psa 103:8-12 NIV) The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. {9} He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; {10} he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. {11} For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; {12} as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

If God does not count it, why should we?

If God has removed our transgressions, why should we bring them back?

If God is for us, who can be against us?

If God through Isaiah says: *(Isa 44:21 NIV) "Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you.*

Then - - we know that if God made us and that he does not forget us, we will be all right with him.

Let us then rejoice in the picture John Bunyan provides when he writes: "Suddenly as Christian reached the cross, the burden was loosed from his shoulders and, falling from his back, began to tumble. Onward it rolled until it reached the opening of the sepulchre, where it fell inside and disappeared." (p. 17)

Modified from The Church Alphabet:

As an Associate Academic Dean at Asbury University, I sometimes received challenging letters. A few years ago a rather elderly college alumnus wrote to me in anguish of conscience. He asked me to take

back his degree. He confessed that he had cheated on a chemistry test in the 1930's. It seemed that he was rightly "trying to get his house in order."

It was my privilege to be a channel of God's grace and thus I wrote him a letter of absolution along the following lines:

You are to be commended for your courage and spiritual determination in writing to me about your dishonesty in a chemistry test so many years ago. Events that took place in the 1930's and 1940's are quite a while ago but the Devil does use these things to cause us pain. John writes in I John 2:1-2:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

I trust that you have asked God for His forgiveness and that you do sense that He is able to forgive and to forget. Often times we have more difficulty forgetting than we should.

At this point, I see no need to make any changes in the records here. I believe that as you are honest before God, He will and does forgive you. I too add my own forgiveness of your action so long ago. As the representative of Asbury College, I extend to you God's forgiveness and redeeming love. May you feel His watch care and loving presence in your life today.

I trust that this alumnus found redeeming grace through my letter.

A CHORUS (Walter Dustin Kallenbach words; Herbert G. Tovey, tune):

*Rolled away, rolled away, rolled away
Every burden of my heart rolled away
Every sin had to go 'neath the crimson flow
Rolled away, rolled away, rolled away
Every burden of my heart rolled away*

A GOSPEL SONG (Minnie A. Steele):

*I remember when my burdens rolled away;
I had carried them for years, night and day.
When I sought the blessed Lord,
And I took Him at His word,
Then at once all my burdens rolled away.*

*Refrain
Rolled away, rolled away,
I am happy since my burdens rolled away.
Rolled away, rolled away,
I am happy since my burdens rolled away.*

*I remember when my burdens rolled away;
That I feared would never leave, night or day.
Jesus showed to me the loss,
So I left them at the cross;
I was glad when my burdens rolled away.*

*I remember when my burdens rolled away,
That had hindered me for years, night and day.
As I sought the throne of grace,
Just a glimpse of Jesus' face,
And I knew that my burdens could not stay.*

*I am singing since my burdens rolled away;
There's a song within my heart night and day.
I am living for my King,
And with joy I shout and sing:
"Hallelujah, all my burdens rolled away!"*

Psa 103:8-12 NIV) The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. {9} He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; {10} he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. {11} For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; {12} as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Amen.