



November 29, 2015

Ezra 3:10-13

Ever Changing, Never Changing Part 4

"Don't Let Yesterday Rob You of Today"

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Do you ever find yourself dwelling too much on the past that it has affected the present? Bad memories and even good memories can rob us of enjoying the present. We can miss the goodness of God *today* if we are stuck in *yesterday*. In today's teaching, Pastor Gary challenges us to build on the good past, give God the bad past, and learn to see what God is doing in the present.

Two Groups

1. In Ezra chapter three, there are two groups represented:
 - a. The older folks were those over 70 years of age, who had experienced life before the exile and 70 years of captivity.
 - i. They remembered life, as it was when they lived in Jerusalem.
 - ii. They remembered the splendor and glory of the Temple.
 - iii. They looked at the laying of the new cornerstone as a sad time.
 - iv. They wept and were sorrowful, because they looked back to the good old days.
 - b. The younger folks include everyone younger than 70, who had only known life in Babylon.
 - i. They had no personal remembrance of the Temple or worship in the Temple.
 - ii. They were focused on what God was doing in the present.
 - iii. They were excited about the present and they were looking forward to the future.

2. Pastor Gary said Ezra chapter three is not about a clash between the senior adults and the young adults, because a person could have been 68 years old and still have had no idea about what the Temple and life in Jerusalem was like.
3. The reality is that this was a clash of interpretations, not a clash of generations.
4. The older folks
 - a. Interpreted things based on what God had done.
 - b. Interpreted things based on what was in the rear view mirror and days gone by.
5. The younger folks
 - a. Interpreted things based on what God was doing in the present and what he would do in the future.
6. **Ezra 10:13** - *"No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away."*

We Must Not Let Memories Of The Past
Rob Us Of Seeing What God Is Doing In The Present

7. "There was a danger in their weeping. The backward look, which discounts present activity, is always a peril. Regrets over the past, which paralyze work in the present, are always wrong. Moreover, all such regrets, as in this case, are in danger of blinding the eyes to the true value and significance of the present." - G. Campbell Morgan
8. All of us are prone to being stuck in the past, which will cause us to miss out on what the Lord is doing in the present.
9. This relates to us individually, as well as to the church corporately.
10. This also has to do with both bad and good memories.
11. If we become stuck in the past or stuck holding on to bad memories, we will be robbed of seeing what the Lord is doing in the present.

12. Bad memories come in one of three ways or a combination of these three ways: tragedy, offenses, and sinful choices.

a. Tragedy

- i. When tragedy strikes, it creates lasting bad memories.
- ii. Tragedy, in a sense, has a way of causing time to stop.
- iii. Oftentimes, most of a person's life will be measured by one tragic event.
- iv. One thing is sure, and that's the fact that tragedy changes our lives.
- v. Time doesn't heal all wounds, but over time, the Lord's grace will provide coping mechanisms or the ability to manage grief or tragedy in a way that will help us see what the Lord is doing in a good way in the present.
- vi. Pastor Gary encouraged people to remember that they need to build on the good past, give to God the bad past, and pray that we always have eyes to see what he's doing in the present.
 1. This is the kind of grace a person needs when they have been betrayed by their spouse, so they can manage the betrayal in a way that allows them to trust again.
 2. This is the kind of grace that parents need when a child dies, so they can manage their grief in a way that allows them to love and be engaged in the lives of their other children.

b. Offenses

- i. Things people do to wrong us or harm us or hurt us can also create bad memories.
- ii. What we do with offenses is critical because the person who focuses on past offenses and wastes time rehearsing and rehashing an offense is blinded to all of the good the Lord is doing in the present.
- iii. The account of Herodias and King Herod provides a classic example of this truth.
 1. Herod "stole" his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, and John the Baptist confronted them because they were living in sin.
 2. [Mark 6:19a](#) - *"... Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him."*
 3. When she saw an opportunity to exact her revenge, she asked Herod to give her the head of John the Baptist!
- iv. [Hebrews 12:15](#) - *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."*
 1. If we rehearse an offense, we will end up defiling many, because our bitterness will spill over onto other people.
- v. The key to getting over offenses and mistreatment and hurt, is to forgive.

1. [Colossians 3:13](#) - *"Bear with each other and forgive one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*
 2. [Ephesians 4:32](#) - *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*
- vi. We should never be tempted to think that forgiving someone over an offense validates the offense, and makes it seem as though it was "no big deal."
1. Forgiveness doesn't mean that all of a sudden what someone did to you was okay; forgiveness means that you no longer give that person the power to hold you captive to what they did. In doing so, you set yourself free by giving the person to God and the offense to God, letting God heal your heart, and leaving it up to God to deal with the person who offended you.
- c. Sinful Choices
- i. There will be times in our lives when we look back with deep regret over choices we've made and things we've done, however, we need to avoid being stuck there.
 - ii. We need to repent and seek the forgiveness of the Lord.
 1. [1 John 1:9](#) - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*
 - iii. We also need to forgive ourselves, so that the things of the past don't rob us of all the Lord is doing in the present.

13. Good memories

- a. Good memories can also rob us of all the Lord is doing in the present.
- b. This can happen to us if we only focus on fond memories and the "good old days."
- c. This can happen to us if we compare everything to yesterday and wanting everything to be like it used to be.
- d. Pastor Gary shared the story of Peter, when he was with Jesus, James and John, on the Mount of Transfiguration, as being an indicator of Peter being sentimental in this regard.¹
 - i. [Luke 9:33](#) - *"As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, 'Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters - one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not know what he was saying.)"*
 - ii. Peter was basically advocating that they needed to do something to preserve the moment.

¹ [Luke 9:28-36](#)

The Rest Of The Story

14. God brought the prophet Haggai onto the scene to speak to people in both groups.
- a. **Haggai 2:1-3, 6-9** - *“On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: ‘Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, “Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: “In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord Almighty. “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the Lord Almighty. “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,” says the Lord Almighty. “And in this place I will grant peace,” declares the Lord Almighty.” ”*
 - b. Haggai was instructing the people to understand that it wasn’t about the structure; it was about the God who visits within and does his work in people’s hearts.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Ezra 3:10-13** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the ways you’ve lived your life looking to the past and the good old days?
4. Were there blessings from the Lord that you missed or were diminished because you were focusing on the past?
5. What are some of the ways you are intentional about living in the present, and looking forward to the future?
6. Read and discuss G. Campbell Morgan’s quote. (See #7 above)
7. How have specific tragedies you’ve experienced shaped your life?

8. What are some of the ways the grace of the Lord and the coping mechanisms he provides helped you manage your grief?
9. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about building on the good past, giving the Lord the bad past, and looking for the good things the Lord is doing in the present.
10. Read and discuss [Hebrews 12:15](#).
11. How have rehearsing or rehashing an offense or offenses paid negative dividends in your life?
12. How has the Lord helped you grow in the area of forgiveness?
13. Read and discuss [Colossians 3:13](#) and [Ephesians 4:32](#).
14. Do you find that you are quick or slow to turn to the Lord for forgiveness?
15. Read and discuss [1 John 1:9](#).
16. Do you do whatever you can to try to preserve the good memories, like Peter in [Luke 9:33](#)?
17. How should you live in the present and enjoy the blessings of the Lord, and then move forward?
18. Read and discuss [Haggai 2:1-3, 6-9](#).
19. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).