

Psalm 132 Littlebourne 4.12.22

Intro I remember many years ago hearing a lovely, elderly, Scottish preacher, Campbell McAlpine, expounding a verse of scripture. He started with the very first word which was: 'Oh'. He pointed out that we tend to overlook 'OH!' and proceeded to invest it with tremendous feeling in his wonderful Scottish tones. I wish I could reproduce it for you, but I haven't got the maleness or the Scottishness to do it justice.

I have been using the English Standard Version to meditate in this psalm and the first word in that version is: 'Remember' and, emulating Campbell, that's what I'm going to focus on this afternoon.

The Psalmist's prayer In the Hebrew the word is Zakar (zaw-kar) to mark, remember, record, mention and, my favourite because it is a Yorkshire expression, 'think on.' There is a hint of action – not just to passively remember something, but act on it. There is that undercurrent in the Hebrew – and also in the Yorkshire 'So, think on!'

In v. 1 – 5 the Psalmist asks God to remember King David's life, the trials he went through and his great desire and zeal to make a permanent place where God could be worshipped.

At funerals there is often a eulogy about the departed person recounting their life's journey with its struggles and joys, and their legacy. I've never heard – and I'm sure there hasn't been – one which included all their sins and failures. Good thing, too!

However, I don't think these verses are just a eulogy to a great king – after all, God knows all about His servant, David – the good and the bad!

I think the purpose of reminding God about David is revealed in v. 11, 12 and the rest of the Psalm. God made promises to David about his descendants, and this is what the Psalmist wants to base his prayer on. His prayer comes in v 10 'Do not reject Your anointed one'. In other words, 'please do not reject the current king'. I don't know who wrote this Psalm, but maybe it was a king – perhaps Solomon.

It is worth noting the condition in the covenant with David. Verse 12 '**If** your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, **then** their sons shall sit on your throne forever.' Of course, we know that successive kings of Israel broke the covenant, and the nation suffered the consequences, however God, in His mercy and love, continually brought them back to Himself and, of course, the great fulfilment of this covenant was Great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus, Who will reign forever.

When we see a promise in scripture which we would like to claim and pray into our lives, we must make sure we always look to see if there is a condition attached is it 'If – then'? It's no good claiming those promises if we aren't prepared to fulfil the condition.

That was the Psalmist's prayer; let's look at one of David's own prayers.

David's prayer Psalm 25 v 6, 7

'Remember, O LORD (covenant name of God), Your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

Remember not, the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;

According to Your love, remember me, for You are good.'

David doesn't come to God to remind Him of his zeal for God, nor his great exploits for God or his royal position. No, David comes humbly before the great and holy God on the basis of God's mercy, love and covenant with His people. David is all too aware of his failures and sins – and not just of his youth, I expect.

David prayed Psalm 25 v11 *'For the sake of Your name, O LORD (again covenant name), forgive my iniquity, though it is great..'*

What about us?

When we come to the Lord in prayer, we would be right to speak to Him of our current struggles and desires for His glory, but not in order to impress Him!

We come to Him on the basis of His love and mercy, like David did.

The old hymn got it right:

Nothing in my hand I bring

Simply to Thy cross I cling

The Lord Jesus, God Himself, took all of your sin and all of mine, in His body when he died on that cross. He was made sin, so that we could be righteous in God's sight and know fellowship with Him forever. Praise God.

At His last meal before His crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples, as He gave them the bread 'Do this in remembrance of Me'. In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul reminds them that this meal, which we call Holy Communion, is to remind us and to proclaim His death until His return in glory.

God doesn't remember our confessed sins

Isn't it funny how poor our memories are about all sorts of events, but we remember all too clearly our sins, failures and humiliations! In many ways that can help us not to repeat those errors, but we should not dwell on past transgressions or beat ourselves up over them. If we have repented and confessed them to the Lord, He wonderfully says:

I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins (Isa 43 v 25)

David again

David's heart was for the Lord and he greatly desired to build a House for the Lord. There had been the Tent which travelled with Israel through the wilderness wanderings, and since then the ark of the covenant – the symbol of God's presence had been in various places, including Jaar which is mentioned in Psalm 132, but there was no permanent building – no Temple – to house the Ark and for the proscribed sacrifices and worship. David desperately wanted to build one in Jerusalem, which God had designated. God said, No, to David because he was a man of war, but that his son, Solomon would build the Temple. David was allowed to gather materials for it, but not build. My daughter, Alice, made a good point, in her sermon a couple of weeks ago: she commended David's attitude – although he must have been desperately disappointed, he didn't disobey, or sulk or refuse to have anything more to do with the project. His heart was for God's glory, not his own.

God's House

We know and it was known in Old and New Testament times that God is not confined to a place:

Acts 7 v 44 – 50 Stephen's speech before he was stoned for believing in Jesus (Saul, later Paul the apostle, witnessed this)

Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert.... Our Fathers under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God's favour and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for Him. However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:

Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.

What kind of house will you build for Me? Says the Lord.

Or where will my resting place be?

Has not My hand made all these things?

The pilgrims

In Psalm 132 v 7 – 9 we Join, as it were, with the people making pilgrimage to Jerusalem for one of the Great Festivals. They cry '*Arise, O Lord, and go to Your resting place, You and the Ark of Your might.*'

They are recalling the wonderful occasion when Solomon's Temple was completed and the Ark brought into it with great rejoicing and praise and thanksgiving. Then, the temple was filled with the glory of God, like a great cloud, so that the priests *could not stand to minister*. There is a weight to God's glory.

On that occasion, Solomon prayed and part of his prayer was;

'But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house that I have built. Yet have regard to the prayer of Your servant and to his plea. O Lord my God, listening to the cry and the prayer that Your servant prays before You, that Your eyes may be open day and night toward this house, the place where You have promised to set Your name, that You may listen to the prayer of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. and when You hear, forgive.

What about us? In Psalm 132 we get a sense of the pilgrims' anticipation and enthusiasm as they set off for the Festival in Jerusalem.

I think of how excited people get about Glastonbury and how they are willing to put up with mud and tents to be together and enjoy the music.

The people of Israel had a much greater reason to be excited – they were going to meet with God in His special place. They wanted Him to be there: *Arise, O Lord, and go to Your resting place.*

They expect that the ministering priests will have purified themselves and be clothed in their clean linen and pray that they will be clothed with salvation and righteousness.

By His grace, we are priests, clothed with salvation and His righteousness. Like the OT priests, we must also make sure we have clean hands and pure hearts, by confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness.

By His grace, we are saints – the people set apart to Him – that's what a saint is. Do we come together with anticipation of being in the presence of the Living God to worship Him? Do we shout for the sheer joy of being His people, forgiven, cleansed, born again and in His presence? What a pity we have been so conditioned to be hushed in church that we can be inhibited when it comes to expressing our joy in the Lord. A preacher I knew said regarding Paul's words: 'Rejoice and again I say rejoice!' that we should 'rejoice soberly'. No! We don't rejoice soberly when our team wins, or at weddings or parties – no, we express our joy in various ways. Obviously, our rejoicing should not be alcohol- fuelled; we are told to be filled with the Spirit, not wine (or beer) and we don't want a fleshly whipping up of emotions, but sometimes we really could express our joy in the Lord more overtly! Just as gloominess and misery sap our strength, so, as Ezra, the High Priest, told the people in Nehemiah 8, 'This day is sacred to the Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

Conclusion

So, there we are: Remember – mark, record, **think on**. And act according to that remembering.

There are many scriptures which speak of remembering, so if you would like some edifying homework, get hold of a concordance and look them up. I have a list of some here.

Exodus 20 v 8; Psalm 25 v 7; Psalm 119 v 55; Ecclesiastes 12 v 1; Isaiah 43 v 18; Jeremiah 31 v 34; Habakkuk 3 v 2; Luke 1 v 72; Acts 20 v 35; 2 Timothy 2 v 8, 9