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Welcome to The MET on *Fry Road* and welcome to The MET on *Jones Road*. And for everyone that's joining us via the internet, you are in the third week of the series called *Resilient*. We're talking about how people make it through tough times. We've been studying the life of Joseph.

Now Joseph and I have something in common—other than our devilishly good looks that I referred to a week or so ago—we also are forgetful. I don't know how well you know me, other than the stories that I say from the pulpit, but those who know me well know that I am a very forgetful person.

- I cannot count all of the wallets that I have lost.
- I cannot tell you how many driver's license fees I have paid to get new licenses because I've lost them.
- Sets of keys: I should have been a locksmith for the amount of money I have spent on sets of keys.
- I am so bad that I could write a list down at night of everything I need to remember in the morning and get up and forget I wrote a list down the next morning.
- I show up frequently—sometimes every day of the week—walking up to the [locked] office door in the back [of the Administration Building] only to remember I forgot my keys and find myself banging on the door. And they know who it is by now.
- I am so bad that my assistant Suzanne—if she leaves before I do—she will put whatever I need to take in front of the door so I have to step on it so I'll remember to bring that home to my wife. It is bad. I mean I'm just scratching the surface of how bad it is.
- You can give me directions and you can write them out and this (like) happened last night: I had a map of how to get home and then I was going in the dark and there were no street lights and I forgot where I was on the map. And if it wasn't for the fact that I've got a GPS on my cell phone (thank You, God, for that) I'd still be on that dirt road this morning probably being mad at the person that didn't give me correct directions, whose name I cannot remember at the time.

So I forget. I forget a lot of stuff. I consistently forget:

- My mother's birthday
- My dad's birthday
- My brother's birthday
- My sister's birthday

But I've never forgotten my wife's birthday. There are some lessons one learns and they are imprinted on your mind for a long time.

It is a gift to forget some things as we're going to see in the life of Joseph. In *chapter 41*, there are three verses in the book of *Genesis* that Joseph teaches us a tool that we all need to learn; and that's how to forget some things. In *chapter 41, verse 50*:

⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On.
Genesis 41:50 (NIV)

So he's out of jail now. He's been anointed number two in all of Egypt. He has interpreted the pharaoh's dream, and they're in the midst of the seven years of plenty. During this time he takes a wife and two sons are born to him. From these two sons, what you are going to see is how God can help us—through their names and through Joseph's life—forget some things and be blessed by the forgetting. In *verse 51*:

⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."
Genesis 41:51-52 (NIV)

Now did Joseph forget that he had a dad and that he had brothers?—certainly not. I mean you're going to find out next week that he never forgot about them; but he forgot in a sense about what happened to him through the hands of his brothers. So does that mean he doesn't remember?—

- Being thrown in the pit (and)
- Lied about to his father (and)
- Being sold as a slave (and)
- Being lied about by Potiphar's wife (and)
- Being forgotten by the cupbearer

Did he forget about those things? In other words, could he erase his memory?—no, that's not what it means—because we can't erase our memories. But at the same time we shouldn't live in our memories.

There is in my car—I have—a windshield. How many of you all have a windshield?—yeah, good. Glad you do. I also have a rearview mirror. How many of you all have a rearview mirror?

Now when you drive and you get on [State Highway] 290—or wherever you go to work—do you look in your rearview mirror and drive backwards? The answer to that (hopefully) is “no” for you this morning. All right?—no, you have a windshield. Why?—the windshield is (you know) a hundred times or a thousand times bigger than your rearview mirror.

But many times we go through life looking in the rearview mirror and not looking ahead. If I did that tomorrow morning and I would try to drive forward by looking in my rearview mirror and glancing back all the time, I'd hit somebody. I'd damage my vehicle. I might even hurt myself. I may even kill myself by going off of a bridge not looking where I'm going but always looking in the rearview mirror. Life is like that many times. Life is not meant to be lived in the rearview mirror. Life is meant to be lived in the windshield—going forward, enjoying today, enjoying next week, anticipating next year, and the good things that God is going to do.

And so like Joseph we need to remember to forget some things in our life. We need to remember [to forget], for example, the sin in your past.

REMEMBER TO FORGET...

SIN IN YOUR PAST

We need to remember to forget the sin in our past. Because if we don't, then we're going to be controlled by guilt and remorse and we're going to think about the unfinished business and the mistakes and the things that we have done and we're going to have a tremendous amount of regret. Maybe there are days when you think:

- I wish I'd have never gone there.
- If I hadn't have gone there, this wouldn't be happening right now.
- I wish I'd have never have met him or met her.
- I wish we could erase that night.
- I wish I had never taken the first—whatever.
- It was the biggest mistake of my life when I walked out on her [or] when I walked out on him.
- I wish I'd have never treated my children that way.
- I wish I'd have never made that mistake.
- I wish I would have never gone to this school

—and all the regrets that we have of all of the sin that we have committed; and we live in hindsight. Hindsight may be 20-20 and you may look and say: Yeah, I shouldn't have done that. But also hindsight can be a big whip in the hands of the enemy. It can sting our conscience. It could drag us down. It could make us live in the past.

For some reason—I don't know why this is—but for some reason the forgiveness of Jesus Christ is for another person and never for me. Those verses in the Bible that talk about the forgiveness of God: Well, those are for people who are outside of Christ, but they're not for me. But that's not true.

Here's what the Bible says about God's forgiveness toward us. *Jeremiah, chapter 31, verse 34*, [NIV] my ultimate, favorite—well, I can't say that; I say that about a lot of verses, but this one is right up there as well—about forgiveness. Here's what he says: "For I will" this is God speaking "forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." I love that verse.

Many times the Holy Spirit of God has had to remind me of that verse when I'm back here [turns his back to the congregation] trying to go forward in life. But because of this big thing that I did somewhere in my past, that flashes across my mind—it drags me back to a time that I have no business going to. There are times when I minister—there are even times when I'm preaching—where the enemy will try to flash across my mind some big sin, in my mind, that I have committed that he would say to me: Oh, preach on it, preacher—remember this? Do you remember that? Do you remember this?

Does he do it to you?—of course, he does. Of course, he does. That's why you feel like a hypocrite sometimes. That's why you don't go forward because: How can I go forward when—

- I've committed this great sin against God (and)
- I've done this thing (and)
- I've had this divorce (or)
- I was in jail

—or whatever it is that, in your mind, it was the ultimate worst thing that you could possibly do? And you [and I] go back there and we play in the mud and in the mire of regret and self-pity and doubt and all of the sorrow that that brings up.

We need to remember at that time that we need to remember to forget about the sins in our past. God has.

- The only way to have a conscience that can deal with that
- The only way to be cleansed from that kind of bondage
- The only way to cut those ropes that keep dragging us into the past to a time that is no more [and] to a person that we are no more

—is to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ continuously; not just when you come to Jesus, not just when you have that moment of faith—

- Where Jesus becomes your Savior
- Where you believe that He died for the sins of the world

But you've got to believe that every day of your life, every time that you sin. Did Jesus die for that sin?—yes, He did.

Listen to what *1 John 1:9* says. Here's what the Bible teaches us, "If we confess our sins" and do we not do that when we go back here? [turns his back on the congregation]—we're confessing sin again.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and {he is} just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (NIV)

Now who is faithful and who is just in that case?—Jesus is. He's the faithful one: He's never going to not do what He says He's going to do. And He is just: He is going to deal with our sins. And so when He takes our sin He is faithful to God and He is just with our sin. He reminds us that He died for our sin and that blood that cleansed us X-time ago (when you became a believer) is the blood that cleanses you now.

It's the only way in this life to have a conscience that can stand before God Almighty, each and every day, and embrace His will and to do and to live in a way that's pleasing to Him without going back. Now—

- Maybe some of you have regrets from last night
- Maybe some from Friday night
- Maybe you have regrets this morning of what you said and how you treated somebody

Don't live back there. Come to Jesus Christ, be cleansed by His blood, your conscience will be set free, and the Truth—who is Jesus—will keep you on the right path. So don't go back there. You can remember to forget about your sin in the past.

I loved the music this morning. It was tremendous. And I love the reminder in that hymn that we sang: *Just as I Am*. Well, how?—broken that's just as I am—sinful, busted, red-handed, major mistakes, guilty conscience, condemned—that's me. But look, it said just as I am You [Jesus] will welcome, You will pardon, You will cleanse and—listen!—You will relieve. You will relieve the guilt of my sin.

- You want some relief this morning?

- You want to quit living in the past?
- You want to quit being haunted by ghosts that are long dead and gone?
- Do you want the voices to go away?
- Do you want to go forward with God?

Then you will need to remember that Jesus Christ died for your sin. The Father chooses to remember them no more. Jesus chooses to forgive you and cleanse your conscience. Remember to forget about your sin in the past. That'll help you out. Amen? You're all stunned or sleepy—one of the two, all right?

Number next—you need to remember to forget about the sin in your past—but just as dangerously many times is: we need to remember to forget about the blessings in your past

REMEMBER TO FORGET... BLESSINGS IN YOUR PAST

[Forget] the blessings in my past if they keep me from going on with God. If what I have experienced in the past—and it's no different from sin—if what I've experienced in the past of the good things of God keep bringing me here [looking back] and pining and wishing for and longing for a day that could never be. It stops me from facing reality today. It stops me from trusting God today and wondering: Boy, if God was just as good as He was back then—well He is, but we're living in the past.

Guys, I want to jump to the second scripture in this point—*Numbers, chapter 14, verses 3 [and 4]*. God has delivered the Israelites from Egypt. God has provided manna—it's been raining down from Heaven. When they're thirsty He gave them water to drink. And now they're on the boundary of the Promised Land and they send the spies in. And the spies come back and they said: Boy, it's just like God said it would be. But there are these giants in the land—there are some obstacles here; there are some things that we're going to have to overcome—and when we looked at them, man! We looked like grasshoppers in our own eyes because of these big challenges that are there called giants. So they all got together and here's what they said:

³ "Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴ And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Numbers 14:3-4 (NIV)

Future shock: challenges that we have today sometimes make us long for a period in time that we thought was better. It keeps us hanging on to yesterday.

But let me tell you what I know about the past:

- We over-inflate what it was really like (and)
- Then we underestimate the power of God *now* to get us through whatever challenge that we have

America is just enthralled with *retro*. You know what *retro* is?—back. Everybody wants to go back to the greatest decade there ever was: the ‘70s. Everybody wants to go back there: Boy, it was so good in the ‘70s. I grew up in the ‘70s—it wasn’t good! And then the people that were my age in the ‘70s, they say: Well, we want to go back to the ‘50s! And then other people want to go back to the ‘30s. And those people want to go back to the 18-something, and then there’s only so far that you can go back!

We romanticize what the past was like: Those were the good old days. No, you were whining and griping back then. Things were bad back then. You didn’t like your situation back then.

Here’s what they are saying: Well, shouldn’t we go back to Egypt? Well, let’s take a look at Egypt. What were you doing in Egypt? Well, it was good old days. Those good old days in Egypt—even earlier on in the book of *Numbers*—they’re talking about: We want the garlic and the leeks and the melons that we used to eat. We’re tired of this manna. [*Numbers 11:5-6* (paraphrased)]

Here’s what they were going through in Egypt that they want to go back to—“Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” [*Numbers 14:4 (NIV)*—here’s what happened:

- They were slaves—they’re free here. They were calling out to God and there was no deliverer for 400 years and they want to go back there.
- They had nothing to eat—they were poor—they had garlic and leeks. I mean, think about it. In spaghetti it might be really good; by itself—I don’t think so.
- They were beaten.
- They were made to throw their newborn children into the Nile to be eaten.

Now, that’s what they want to go back to; because they think it is better in the past, because they have a distorted view of the past.

And when we want to go back and we want to go back to when God was so good to us in Egypt—no He wasn’t. No he wasn’t. [Repeated for emphasis] When we want to go back to the past it’s because we are refusing to deal with the challenges that are in the present. Every set of new challenges and every new opportunity has new requirements. We look at the glass and we say: Oh, it’s half full. Or we look at the glass and say: No, it’s half empty. Let me tell you what it is: it’s really both of them. It’s half empty and it’s half full.

The lure of the past—the familiar—it causes us less stress because we knew what life was like back then. But you really didn’t, you just think that you did.

If in our spiritual life all we can talk about is what God did last year: Oh, remember when we were really—man, God was so good back 10 years ago? And remember when our church was blah, blah, blah 15 years ago? And you know what it was like before he came? Blah, blah, blah, blah...and what it was like way back here? No you don’t!

God has something *today*. God has a will for us *today*. It’s not that I got saved 30 years ago that I talk about, but let me tell you how God saved me *today*, and what God’s doing for me *today*, and what He delivered me from *today*, and how He blessed me *today*, not tomorrow. God’s mercies are new—when?—every day, not in 1972. Those are stale mercies. I want some fresh mercies.

- I want stuff *today*.
- I want to talk about what God did *today*.
- I want to tell them about how the Spirit is moving *today*.
- I want to tell them about how many people got saved *today*.
- I want to tell them about how He forgave me *today*.
- I want to talk about what God is going to do tomorrow because of what He's going to do *today*.

You've got to remember sometimes to forget your past if it's keeping you from your present and from your future. (Now I don't know where I was, but that was pretty good to get off on.)

Do you know why we get discouraged and remain stuck where we are? Let me tell you why. In our mind we have a time machine and it takes us back to high school when we were so cool and popular and everything was so great. We didn't even have acne. Now, there is no such thing as a time machine. It's a movie—it's in our head—and we jump back here and all of a sudden:

- Our knees don't hurt (and)
- We can dance (and)
- We're cool (and)
- Life was great (and)
- God was good

That's in your mind! You don't remember what it was like because you don't like to think about bad things, the traumatic times that you had, all you can remember is the good things. So you really can't go back.

But we don't want to go forward either, because we're afraid of the future. So we live in an unreal past like in a time machine in our mind. We are spinning our wheels and we're just grinding the tires. We just want to curl up and suck the thumb of yesterday because life is so hard. We want the good old days.

Let me tell you [about] the good old days. The good old days [are] anytime that God moves in your life. He's moving today. If you walk with Him today, when you get to tomorrow, yesterday will be a good old day. Tomorrow is going to be a good old day and the future will always be a good old day.

Reliving the past only provides temporary shelter from the onslaught of the uncertainties that we face. So rather than face the giants:

- We're going to run back here (and)
- We are going to go back to Egypt (and)
- We are going to eat garlic and leeks (and)
- ...watch our kids [get] thrown into the water (and)
- ...be beaten as slaves without hope

You don't want to go back! You want today and everything today has and how God is going to move in your life and it's just going to prepare you for tomorrow.

Here's what Paul says in the New Testament about this—*Philippians, chapter 3*—listen to what he says, "this one thing I do..." Listen, when someone tells you, "this is the key to my

success,” listen to what they’re saying. This is just what Paul says: Let me you the key to my success [for] going on with God:

...[But] one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

Philippians 3:13b (NIV)

Man! We’re straining for the past. Forget it. That’s gone. It is history. It ain’t never [sic] going to happen again. It is in the books. It’s over. You can’t open them back up. Strain ahead for what’s ahead.

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14 (NIV)

Do you know why sometimes we lean—whatever—yearn for the past?—because we haven’t done anything lately. And so the only good feeling we have is what we accomplished back here [takes several steps backward]:

- When God was doing something in my life
- When God delivered me (and)
- I was living by faith and it was so good

That means we don’t want to live by faith *today*.

I want to tell you something. It doesn’t matter what we did as a church last year. It doesn’t matter what we did two years ago. It doesn’t matter what we did 10 years ago. It’s a matter of what we do now. Let’s quit pining away for something that’s never going to happen again, and let the fresh mercies and grace and will of God fall upon us. Quit looking back into the past. It makes great movies, but it’s a horrid life.

When who we are is based on who we were, we run the risk of avoiding the future and missing God. I want to say that again. When who we *are* is based on who we *were*, we run the risk of missing God.

- You’d better not be the same today that you were yesterday.
- You’d better not be the same this year that you were last year.
- You ought to be changing from glory to glory (and)
- Jesus Christ ought to be remolding and remaking your life.

Whatever you were last year: dead, buried, gone. This is who I am today and we are going forward in Jesus Christ. If who I am is based on what I used to be, I’m not moving with Jesus.

New every day:

- Forget about the sin in your past
- Forget about the blessing in your past
- ...if it’s keeping you from your future hope
- ...if it’s keeping you now from walking with God

Drop that stuff. Get away from that stuff. I’m going to tell you this: it’s never going to be that way again; because it can’t. It never will. You can’t go back. All you can do is go forward. If you choose to go back, all you’re going to do is stand still. Life is going to pass you by and God’s

plan is going to pass you by. Everything that God has planned for you today that is good and from Him it is going to pass you by. Don't let that happen.

We have hope. I have hope. Forget what happened in the past. I have hope today—why?—because something that God wants to do in my life has not happened, but I believe that it's going to happen.

Now listen to what Paul says about this in *Romans 8:24* and *25*:

We were given this hope when we were saved....

Romans 8:24a (NLT, 2004 edition)

What's the hope we were given when we were saved?

- Man, I'm going to be with Jesus.
- I'm going to be like Jesus.
- I've got hope of glory in my life.

²⁴ ... (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. {Do we?} ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

Romans 8:24b-25 (NLT, 2004 edition)

Rather than saying: I'm going to go back to what I think I used to have—I'm going to be patient [and] I'm going to be confident that God wants to do this thing...

- Overcome this challenge (and)
- Make a way for me (and)
- Provide like He never has before (and)
- Change my life (and)
- Bless my marriage (and)
- Make my kids rich so I don't have to be rich (and)
- All those good things that you want

God wants to do that, but I've got to believe and I have to hope that God can do that.

Do you know what it's like? Although I've never been like this, I've been told a lot about pregnancy. When a woman finds out she's pregnant, the larger her belly gets, the more hopeful that she is in having a child. The day is coming. How do I know? I can just feel him in there. Oh, how do you know? Well, he moves! And the bigger that woman gets, the more pregnant (I don't know if you can get *more* pregnant) but the more further along in the pregnancy that she gets, the room starts to get ready, and all she can think about is the baby. And then she knows there will be excruciating pain in delivering the child. But she embraces the excruciating pain—why?—because she has hope that when that pain is over the child is going to be there. We're going to have a baby. What we hoped for has happened.

What you hope for in your life, you patiently wait for like a pregnant woman until God gives birth to that reality in your life. Don't live in the past. Don't live in the regret of your sin. Live today for Jesus Christ and go forward in your life. Have hope. (Thank you very much, there was one clap, but I'll take it.)

That's for God. God does that. God will do it in your life. Don't stop because of a bad thing that you did. Come to Jesus. Be cleansed by the blood. Don't pine for something that God did back then, he's not going to do that again. He's going to do this *today*. Go forward. So—

- Remember to forget about your sin in your past
- Remember to forget about your past blessings if they keep you from today's blessings and future blessings (and then)
- Remember to forget about the hurt in your past

REMEMBER TO FORGET... HURT IN YOUR PAST

That's what he said about Manasseh: God has caused me to forget about my family. Not that he ever forgot about his dad and his brothers; but the fact that he's not bitter about it. He's not living in there:

- I can't believe that he did that to me!
- I can't believe that my dad believes I'm dead.
- I can't believe that my brothers sold me.

If he would have stopped right there—and many of us have stopped at the place in our life where we were hurt the most—and we won't go on. It's like we won't trust God any more: God let that happen to me and it hurt! What if I do that again?

Life is filled with hurt and pain and bad things happen (and):

- You get sick (and)
- Sometimes your children die (and)
- Sometimes your spouse leaves you when you don't want your spouse to leave you (and)
- Sometimes you get cancer (and)
- Sometimes you are murdered (and)
- People are killed (and)
- Bad things happen

But you can't stop [back] where bad things happen. If so, there would have been no resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The worst thing that ever happened is that an innocent man died for guilty people, but that wasn't the end of the story. Three days later Jesus came up out of the tomb. If He'd have stopped at His pain, there'd have never been the victory of the resurrection.

Don't stop back in your pain. Don't go back there and say:

- It was so hurt
- I just can't go on

Great soap opera; bad living—bad living.

Do you remember—it was a great movie—did you all watch *Forrest Gump*? Yeah, sure, everybody did. He was a great theologian, Forrest Gump. Do you remember Forrest Gump when he was in Vietnam, he had a lieutenant and his name was Lieutenant Dan? Remember when Lieutenant Dan wanted to be a hero? His greatest deal was: I get to die in a battle like everybody before me. But Forrest saved his life. Remember Forrest carried him to safety. He lost his legs when that bomb went off, but Forrest ran him literally to safety. Years later after they lost touch, he runs into Lieutenant Dan on the street; and do you remember what emotionally he was like?

He was angry and he was bitter and he was caustic and he hated Forrest because Forrest saved his life. And now, all he has are no legs and the constant reminder of the hurt and the pain and his unrealized dreams of being a hero that were buried there in Vietnam along with his legs.

Do you remember toward the end of the story what happened? He finally makes peace with his past and just accepts the fact that: Okay, I don't have any legs; and okay I'm alive. I think I'm going to enjoy my life. And the next time that you see him:

- He's walking on those titanium legs (and)
- He has his wife with him as he's going to Forrest's wedding (and)
- His wife happens to be Vietnamese

Make peace with it. Here's what he said: I've made peace with that. All of this stuff happened and that's just the way life is; but I'm not going to let it keep me in the past.

Now here's the thing that's really difficult, just like in the life of Joseph. The people that you love the most are the ones that hurt you the most, isn't it? I mean, if some stranger does something to me or says something to me, he's a stranger. He doesn't know me. That person never cared about me. But when—

- Your wife (or)
- Your husband (or)
- Your children (or)
- Your parents (or)
- The people you go to church with (or)
- The people that minister to you (or)
- The people that are supposed to be taking care of you (and)

—they hurt you and they say things about you and they're nasty toward you and they say rumors about you; or they physically abuse you or they sexually abuse you—and it's from the people that are supposed to love you and you love them—that's hard. But it's not impossible.

Do you know what Jesus said in the book of *Zechariah*? The book of *Zechariah* is prefiguring Christ and it says this: Where did You get those scars? Jesus, one day in Heaven as we look at His nail-pierced palms and we look at His side—even though we have been forgiven of everything, and that life is a billion years ago—there's going to be someone that says: Where did You get those, Jesus? He said: These are the wounds that I received when I was in the house of my friends. [*Zechariah 13:6* (paraphrased)]

Did that stop Jesus from saving us and going forward and loving us and living for us? No. Nor should it stop us.

But here's what I'll say: I've noticed it's a lot easier to walk with a cane than to go through physical therapy. It's a lot easier to get sympathy from people when you're limping over a wound that you ought to get over then. It's a minor deal. You should have gone to therapy, but you wouldn't do it because it was too painful to go through the therapy.

My mother has a crooked finger [illustrates with his index finger], which has pulled many a lollipop out of our throats. She is the only one that could get down there and yank the thing out—especially my younger brother. Whenever he would be choking on it, she'd have to go down there. I said: Mom, how'd your hand get like that? She said: When I was a little girl I got a tiny

little sliver inside of my finger. But I was so afraid of the pain of the needle going in to take that sliver out that I wouldn't let anybody touch it. Until it got so infected they had to take me to the hospital and they had to cut part of my finger off. When they sewed it up it remained like that. If she had just taken the therapy, her finger would be straight.

But we choose to remain crooked because it is easier and—we think—less painful to not do the therapy but to limp around for the rest of our life. I'm going to tell you: Let every crooked limb be straightened. Let every weak knee be strengthened. Don't live by somebody's hurt—

- When Jesus Christ was bruised for you
- When He took our iniquity
- When He was beaten for us

Don't take another beating from somebody when Jesus Christ can get you through anything.

- Remember not to dwell on the sin of your past.
- Remember to forget the sin of your past.
- Remember to forget the blessings of your past if they keep you from futures ones.
- Remember to forget about the people who hurt you.

Do you know what we do? We wear a scarlet letter a lot of times, don't we? A scarlet letter—just like the story, *The Scarlet Letter*—committed adultery, they put a big A on her, even though she was supposed to have been forgiven and paid for that sin. All of her life: big A. Oh yeah, you're the...you're the...you're the...you're the...you're the...you're the—pick it out:

- You're the drug addict
- You're the adulterer
- You're the fornicator
- You're the one that got pregnant without being married
- You're the liar
- You're the cheater
- You're the selfish one

—whatever tag that you have.

You've got to take the tag off by coming to Jesus and remembering who Jesus said you are:

- No, you're my child
- No, I've got a plan for you
- No, you are righteous in my eyes
- I have set you free from sin
- You're adopted into the Father's family
- I am your brother
- You are related to me
- You are seated in the heavenlies
- I have given you the Spirit of God
- I have all things freely given to you
- There is nothing I won't give to you

Don't stop when somebody hurts you. Let it go, forget about the hurt of your past.

Then finally (and we're done with this):

REMEMBER GOD REFINES THEN REWARDS

Why did Joseph go through all of that? (We'll talk more about this next week.) Why did God allow Joseph—whom He'd given this great vision and great dreams to when he was a young child—why did He let him go through all of that? Because they simply refined Joseph. Like chipping away on stone and sand paper on rough wood and filling in the holes and putting the final touch on it. So after about 17 years, he is what exactly God wants him to be. Through the pain and through the suffering and through the difficulties God refined him so He could reward him with his vision that He gave him—with the dream that He gave him.

Look at his second child. His second child is named Ephraim.

The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

Genesis 41:52 (NIV)

Are you suffering today? Do you lack in your life? Has somebody hurt you? Does past sin haunt you? I'm telling you: in the middle of that, according to the Word of God, God will double-bless you in your suffering if you just trust God, if you just let Him refine you. If you'd say (you know what?):

- I'm just being refined right now (and)
- It's difficult and it hurts and it's painful; but I am not going to live [back] there
- I'm not going to go back there
- I'm going to go on with God

Let me challenge you this morning. Go on with God. Don't let your sin, don't let your past, and don't let somebody who has hurt you keep you from everything that God has for you.

Joseph is the story of a man:

- Who endured serious hurt and serious pain
- Who was rejected
- Who was lied about
- Who was left alone to suffer by himself

But yet God, through all of that, was simply refining him so He could bless him.

So if things are going wrong in your life—so you think right now—if you begin to pine for yesterday and better times, then you need to start saying this thing: I wonder what God is up to right now—because:

- Something is making me not want to go forward
- Something is making me want to dwell on some sin that I did
- ...thinking that God doesn't love me and I've disqualified myself
- Something is trying to make me dwell on some past hurt
- So God must really be getting ready to do something big in my life
- So I choose today to go forward with God
- I choose not to be bitter
- I choose not to live in the past

- I believe, because of the things that are happening to me, something good is getting ready to bless me
- ...because He is God and I am not (and)
- No matter what happens to me, it cannot stop God in my life—period

If you need a job, if you're sick, whatever it is—honestly, I've said this before but honestly—what's the worst thing that could happen to you? You die. Dying is—what?—the best thing that could happen to you:

- Because you're going to Heaven
- Because God's plan is complete in your life

Whatever purpose you had, it's over and you get to go to be with Jesus. It's the best thing that can happen.

So why are you afraid of dying?—because you're living in the past [back] here; and God hasn't done anything in a long time in your life. That shouldn't be the case with any believer in this room. I don't care what has happened to you, what circumstances are, or what you've done in your past; today His mercies are fresh and new—today. So I'm going to ask you *today* to recommit your life to *today*, to the God that is today:

- He is the God of yesterday. Yes, He was.
- He is the God of today. Yes He is.
- He is the God of tomorrow. Yes He will be.

Because He is God, live this moment for Jesus Christ *today*. You will not begin to believe what your life is going to be like tomorrow.

Let's pray together. Resilient people know how to let go of their past. Are there some things that you need to let go of this morning?

- Are there some family things that happened?
- Some sin that happened in your life?
- Some hurt, some pain by some people that happened?

You just need to let it go. I just want to agree with you in prayer this morning. If there is something in your life that [you'd say]: I've just got to let that go; it's keeping me from what God has; will you just raise your hand? Nobody is looking. [You're saying]: I've got to let some things go. Yeah, good.

Father, I pray for my brothers and sisters who just raised their hand[s]. I'm raising mine because, God, there's things that I've got to let go or they are never going to let go of me. God I pray for them—I pray for myself—that today would be the day that we quit living in the rearview mirror and we start some windshield living; and we just look out and we anticipate today that today You're going to do something good for us, God.

(So this thing—whatever it is—are you ready to name it?) Lord, in Your name I give You—fill in the blank right now—and I pray You release me from this. I pray that You would focus my eyes forward and that You would give me hope. Cleanse me with Your blood, give me confidence through the Scriptures, and empower me through the Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Well, we're going to do two things before we leave. Number one—well one of the two is:

[1] We're going to take an offering. I'm going to ask our ushers to get in place and get ready to receive our offering. If you're our guest then we just ask that you take that slip of paper that you filled out about what you want us to pray for or any particular thing/question that you have that we could answer. Let us know by indicating on that card.

[2] Secondly if you're a church member when we give God His offering and our tithe, if you need a job today, as that plate goes by, you just say: God, next week I'd love to put something in it. Next week I'd love to give a testimony about what You did for me. Next week God, I would like to get back on track again. Bless me with a job.

Then if you want to be prayed for or you have a spiritual need in your life, as we're dismissed in just a moment on my left and your right on the lower floor there's an *Encouragement Room* there. We encourage you to go back there so we can sit down with the Scriptures and encourage your heart for what you're going through right now.

Let's pray for our offering then I'll have a couple of announcements and we'll be dismissed.

Lord we love You. Thank You for taking care of us. Even when it looks like things are against us, we know that You're for us, Lord. We choose to believe that this day is the day that You've made for us and we're going to live in it and we're going to rejoice.

Those of us that You've blessed with a job, Lord—those of us that You've given income to—we are grateful to You. We give You your tithe and we give You offerings on top of that because we just can't out-give You, God. You're just good all the time. So we pray You'd take this offering and You'd bless it now. In Jesus' name. Amen

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**So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed,
you will be strong in character and ready for anything.**

James 1:4

(New Living Translation, 1996 edition)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*