
Words of Truth

Spiritual Alzheimer's Disease

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In a Bible discussion at my house on a Tuesday night in January, it was noted that there are some similarities between Alzheimer's disease and people who forget the Scriptures. In that class Judy had shared with the class how some behaviors she sees in Julian were similar to Israel's forgetting of God. I said that I needed to write an article on that, so here we are.

"Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other intellectual abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's disease accounts for 50 to 80 percent of dementia cases" (http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp). There are ten early signs for Alzheimer's disease. Among those ten signs there is memory loss, decreased or poor judgment, withdraw from social activities, and changes in personality (http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp).

When you study the Scriptures you can see how people forget the Lord, fall from the right ways, lose their relationship with God and the faithful, and change to become horrible people. Notice this: *"Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. **They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. **They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them"** (Psalms 106:7-23).***

Israel forgot the Lord. They used poor judgment. They wanted to change their social company in ridding themselves of Moses and Aaron. They even would go on to sacrifice their own children to false gods (Psalms 106:36-40). Maybe you could relate many other physical illnesses with Israel as they rode the roller coaster of apostasy, but Alzheimer's disease certainly has some similarities. What we have to do with this is learn from it. We all would not want to lose our physical or mental abilities. We must also have that concern about our spiritual minds too.

Not Losing Your Spiritual Mind

When you are converted to Christ you change the way you think (Romans 12:1-3). One who turns his or her life over to the Lord has to forsake his or her way of thinking (Isaiah 55:7). The converted person has a renewed spirit of his or her mind (Ephesians 4:23). You no longer mind the things of the flesh (Romans 8:5). You cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

Your mind is vital to your service to God. We must have a willing mind to be obedient to the Lord (I Chronicles 28:9). God demands that we love Him with our whole minds (Mark 12:30). So, what do you suppose would happen if we stopped using our spiritual minds aright? What if we forgot what the Lord requires of us? The answer to both of those questions is that we'd be lost spiritually. Therefore, we have to exercise our spiritual minds so that we do not lose our spiritual thinking.

Not Forgetting

Peter wrote an epistle to stir up the minds of those reading it (II Peter 3:1). Peter worked to bring to remembrance things that were already known (II Peter 1:12-13). To some degree, we need to keep studying and hearing the things we already know (Philippians 3:1). The very fact that we need to be put into remembrance (I Timothy 4:6 and II Timothy 1:6) of things we already know shows we can forget those things.

It is not only implied that we can forget about things that God commands of us, He also says we can forget His works and His word (Deuteronomy 4:9, Deuteronomy 4:23, Deuteronomy 6:12, Deuteronomy 8:11-14, Psalms 9:17, Jeremiah 23:27, and Hosea 4:6). Simply put, we can be forgetful hearers of God's word (James 1:25). As if forgetting God's word was not bad enough by itself, going astray involves forgetting the will of God (Psalms 119:176). That then leads to a change in actions.

Behavioral Changes

Departure from the truth also means a change in social activities and friendships. Godly people do not have worldly people as close friends (John 17:14, II Corinthians 6:14-18, Ephesians 5:11, and James 4:4). When people start forgetting God, they stop spending time with the brethren and start spending more time with people of the world. That is what happened when Nehemiah was not keeping a close watch over Israel (Nehemiah 13:6-31). Thus, we all need to be aware that when we're not mindful of God, as we should be, we will act differently (cf. Galatians 4:8).

Conclusion

Lest we forget what God desires of us and start living with bad judgment on our part, let's delight in His word (Psalms 119:16). Let's remember that through His word we have been made alive spiritually (Psalms 119:93 and John 6:63). Be mindful if you notice signs that your spiritual memory is slipping.