

## Remembering All the Way

Deuteronomy 8:2; 2 Timothy 1:1-12

By [Reverend Mr. Brister H. Ware](#)

*The Lord's Day Evening  
April 1, 2012*

Could we pray?

*Lord, we thank Thee for a hundred and seventy-five years, this church. So many other churches, Lord, go on; they're closed. We thank Thee, Father, for strengthening this church. And we give Thee praise and glory and pray that we might honor Thee as we begin this month of remembering Thy faithfulness. In Jesus' name, amen.*

I am reading from Deuteronomy 8 verse 2 and then we'll read from 2 Timothy 1. This is in a verse to help us as we remember this entire month:

“And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD Your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”

And then from 2 Timothy chapter 1:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

The children of Israel were getting ready to go into the Promised Land and they were solemnly, seriously, emphatically instructed to remember all they'd been through as they traveled the last forty years out of Egypt, across Canaan, into the Promised Land. Matthew Poole says - the King James says, "I shall remember all the way which the Lord thy God has led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee and prove thee and know what is in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep My commandments or no." Matthew Poole says:

What does 'all the way' mean? All the way, that is, all the events which befell thee in the way — the miraculous protection, deliverances, provisions, instructions, which God gave thee and which all the frequent and severe punishments of thy disobediences to know what was in thy heart that thou mightest discover to thyself and to others that infidelity, inconsistency, hypocrisy, apostasy, rebellion, and perverseness which lay hidden in thine heart. The discoveries, thereof, was of singular use, both to them and to the church of God in all succeeding ages.

Remember all the way. The Scripture says "Remember all the way which the Lord thy God has led thee. And there's a warning we'll look at, at the end, for those who forget. And as far as Timothy is concerned, Timothy is like many of us. He was raised in a great church, in a Christian family, with a godly grandmother and mother. And because of that, he may have been somewhat sensitive, tenderhearted, and he might have a tendency to be afraid, not to speak the name of Christ. And now his mentor, Paul, is in prison, he might be afraid to go to Rome to see him. And Paul wanted to see him, to be refreshed by him. Paul was warning him and instructing him, "Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Don't be afraid. God has not given us a spirit of fear but of love and power and a sound mind. Don't be ashamed, whatever."

As I think about our church, one thing about our church, I don't think we have been ashamed of the Gospel very much. I have at times. Some highly intellectual, prominent, distinguished person, when I presented the Gospel, said, "That's the most arrogant, selfish, bigoted thing I ever heard in my life," and it took me twenty minutes to regain my coverage and my strength. There's a temptation to be ashamed. Listen, Ligon is bathing you, week after week, he's

saying we're moving into an era when every power that can is going to try to make us ashamed of the Gospel, to make us consider the Gospel hate-speech, and to shut us up. And that's what Paul is begging Timothy not to be ashamed, to be a partaker of the sufferings of the Gospel. "Come to the prison perhaps and comfort me. Risk your freedom to some extent, not presumptuously but prayerfully."

Just thinking about some of the distinctions of our church, there's the affirmation of the full inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. There's the theology of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and the catechisms emphasized in its pulpit, its officers, its teachers, its Christian Education program, encouraging memorization of the catechisms and the Scripture passages. There is the fearless preaching of the whole Word of God from the first word in Genesis to the last word in Revelation. We don't leave anything out. This pulpit covers every single word of it. In the Bible, some of them are hard and difficult but this pulpit will present it faithfully. There's a proclamation of the Gospel at home and around the world with the accompanying medical and educational ministry. There is a demand and full commitment of disciples through serious giving, submission, obedience to God through Christ as our Savior and Lord. There's a demand of discipleship from this pulpit and from this church and from our Sunday School classes. And some people don't like it. They don't. They leave! Okay. The Bible says beware when all men speak well of you. That's true!

And then there's the full dedication and involvement of church officers in the shepherding of the flock of God. Erskine Wells told me, ah I love Erskine! I miss him. He said, "You know, after the Lord brought me through Iwo Jima and all those places and men were shot and stabbed on either side of me and I led the last official bayonet charge in the history of the United States military, I told the Lord that when He got me back I would do anything, anything, anything if my church asked me to do." And he did. Towards the very end he said, "Brisler, you know I told you I'd do anything physically. I can't anymore."

Well, in the early 30's, a young physician and his wife moved to Jackson and they had one child and he was from Capitol Street Methodist Church and he grew up next door to West End Presbyterian Church which became Central Presbyterian Church and is closed today, has been for years. He was a good friend of R.E. Huff, the pastor of Central Presbyterian, and of Mark Wiersing, who was a pastor back during in those days. And the church was still pretty strong evangelically in those old days. But one day in 1936 when J. B. Hutton was preaching in his fortieth year — and there's a beautiful paper I have on my desk telling about his forty years here and accolades of praise from all over the city. One day my father simply turned to my mother and said, and they were at the old church here down on North State Street, "Today we join this church." It set the whole course of my life and destiny. I praise God for it. I don't know why His sovereignty did it but I sure praise God for it.

In the old church when I was baptized J. B. Hutton was there and my mother said I took his fountain pen out and stabbed him in the heart! And everybody said, "Well one thing about old Brister, he'll never be a preacher!" He finally, in his — '73 I think he died, but he was still serving faithfully. In those old days in the old church down there we had no air conditioning. We had windows with large slanted panes and fans. As a little boy, I'd get a little bit bored during the service. We sat on the aisle so that my dad could get out and make his calls if there was an emergency at the hospital, but I found an infallible way to tell how near the service was to getting over. There was a man in front of me with a full undershirt, shirt, and coat. All the men wore it. I don't care how hot it was; they wore it in those days. And I watched the perspiration fall on his shoulder blades. And I could watch that perspiration move across his back until it met and when it met church was out!

On a more serious note, Gerard Lowe came about 1940. He's been a semi-pro baseball player and everybody loved him. He was a great Gospel preacher. One day I was going out with my folks and he was standing there in his frock-tailed coat, suit. He wore a morning suit; a very handsome, distinguished gentleman. And he looked at me and he got down on one knee and he put his arm around me and he said, "Brister, we love you here. This is where we want you. This is another home for you. We love you here, son, and we need you here to serve the Lord." I never forgot it. I wasn't but two or three and it stamped on my soul — a love for the ministry and for First Presbyterian Church. What a blessing it was in those days.

And a couple of other things. Down in, well, during the service sometimes they had a basement and you could go down there with a speaker and listen to the service. And one of our current ruling elders and I used to go down there sometimes. And Orrin Swayze and I were there and sometimes we'd sneak out, but not too often, because I'd start to get up and Orrin would say, "No, Brister, we can't go because my mother and father are going to ask me about the beginning, middle, and end of the sermon!" (laughter) His parents were serious about his getting the message. And we'd listen and try to get something, you know. We'd go out for five minutes and come back! (laughter) He had dedicated parents. Later on, Orrin taught me how to fold papers because I took over his paper route. I'm always grateful for his friendship and love over all these years.

In that old church it came time to do memory work from the catechism and I didn't want to do it. I wasn't particularly interested in that. I got through *The Child's Catechism* and maybe a third of the way through *The Shorter Catechism* and I just said I'm not going to do it. And my mother said, "Son, what can your daddy and I get you to motivate you to learn it?" And I thought, "Well, you know I'm going to one up them. I'm going to give them something I know they won't get." So I said — I'd already gotten a baseball and a glove and a bat. I said, "Okay, but you won't get it." "What is it?" "You won't get it." "What is it?" Now bear in mind when I was seven years old, Fred Yerger who became a leading doctor, internist,

died at age sixty-five and kin to the Yergers in this church, was on a dollhouse in my sister's backyard, on the top, he was hammering. He dropped the hammer and he told me to throw the hammer back to him and somehow the hammer described a perfect arc and the claw caught him in the eye and took his eye out. My folks later bought him a microscope and he became a very outstanding internist out in Arizona.

I knew that if I said what I wanted my folks wouldn't get it, so I said, "Okay, I'll learn it if I can get a Benjamin pump air rifle" — the most powerful and dangerous BB gun in the world. So I turned and walked away and just laughed and my mother said, "Son, you learn it, we'll get it." I said, "Aren't you afraid I'm going to shoot somebody!" She said, "We'll pray about it." And right before my mother died at age ninety-two, a last glimmer of clarity of mind, I said, "Mother, weren't you afraid I was going to shoot somebody's eye out? I'd already knocked Fred's eye out!" She said, "Yes, I prayed about it every day. I was more concerned for your spiritual underpinnings than for anything else." My mother loved the Lord. She was married on Sunday, my older sister was born on Sunday, I was born on Sunday, my next sister was born on Sunday, my last sister was born on Sunday, my dad died on Sunday, and my mother died on Sunday. And she loved the Lord's Day and we thank the Lord for it.

And then on February 24, 1952 John Reed Miller preached his first sermon here. I'm not sure if it was his trial sermon or if it was part of his coming permanently but I do remember it and I do remember that afternoon at three o'clock that my father died at age forty-six of his third heart attack. And I do remember at nine thirty that night we'd turned all the lights out of the house and my mother was crying and I was lying in the back there trying to figure out what the Lord wanted me to do. And I went in and I just simply walked in the bedroom and these words came out of my mouth: "The souls of believers, at their death, being made perfect in holiness, do immediately pass into glory and their bodies, being still united with Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." That's all I said. And my mother later said that was the greatest comfort she'd ever had and it got her through that terrible night. In about fifteen or twenty minutes there was a knock on the door (knock, knock, knock) and I opened the door and there was Robert Mims. He had come to comfort me because he had just lost his father.

Later on, Robert and I, well, we were going to a show one night on the bus and the bus picked up the DCE of our church, Nancy Lipscomb. And I remember Robert Mims said, "Brister, we're going to prayer meeting now and then we can go to the show!" (laughter) We did, we went to prayer meeting, and we started coming to prayer meeting more regularly. It was great when Dr. Miller was preaching it — strong exposition. The church was in bad shape, the church PCUSA. Dr. Miller had come from the north and he knew how focused and determined the liberals were to take control of the entire Presbyterian heritage of this country. He knew it better than anybody else and he knew it would require a determined focus, all our effort if we were going to stop it. So he organized the

entire presbytery and he preached strong sermons and with the backing of a strong session we took control of this presbytery and that enabled many of our churches to withdraw from the PCUS with our property. He, before that, he would, and while he was here, he taught the women in the church. A lot of people wondered, "Well why does he take the time to teach the women in the church? Why don't they use an assistant for that or somebody else?" He told me one day why. He said, "Brister, there's someone that's been trained to keep this church in line with the denomination, to keep us in line with them, and I have to do this. They know they can't do it through the session, it's too strong, nor through the pulpit, and I think they may try to do it through the women in the church. We have such outstanding, powerful, wise ladies. They'll go after them so I'm going to teach." It never happened. He taught and the women in our church are stronger than ever and we thank God for it.

The Columbia Theological Seminary president, J. McDowell Richards, in the early 60's, was trying to raise money. And they came over here and met with our elders and with Dr. Miller and they said, "We want money for the seminary. Some of you have students who are going to be going to the seminary." And our elders and Dr. Miller, particularly Dr. Miller, sent him a message. "We'll be happy to fund a chair on the campus of the Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia providing you get a genuine, Bible-believing, evangelical professor." J. McDowell Richards wrote back and said, "We can't be bought!" And Dr. Miller said, "Very well, we'll just take that money and put it aside and when you make up your mind otherwise we'll give it to you." Well, that money stayed in an account for five years and it became the seed money for Reformed Theological Seminary. Praise God for it. We praise His name. Dr. Miller, he used to quote things. I'll try to remember some of them. I can't remember the first part of the couplet but the second part is, "Nor that standing room be priced, but when I voice the message, may men see Christ." He used to quote, "Men heed Thee, love Thee, praise Thee not, the master praises. What are men?" And he used to quote from Shakespeare. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leadeth on to glory. Omitted and all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries and we must take the current what it serves or lose our ventures." In other words, opportunity, when it comes, you've got to grasp it. And he felt like this was the opportunity here. He organized the presbytery and he became hated and maligned but God greatly used him so that when the time came for us to form the PCA there were a number of strong elders and ministers in place in this presbytery so that when we withdrew in 1973, many of the churches were able to withdraw with their property. What a blessing. What a blessing.

He used to take me around on Sunday night, Dr. Miller did, and he had some printed brochures of his sermon series. And we'd go into hotels and he'd say, "Brister, go in there. I drink coffee in here, they know me. Say, 'Dr. Miller would like to put these on the place where you sign in to register.'" And people would pick them up. They had interesting titles. He always had two titles to his sermon.

And sure enough, there'd be one or two every Sunday that would be at the local hotel, pick this thing up, and come in here on a Sunday night to hear the sermon series. It was a blessing. He'd pick me up and walk around with me. And when I was walking around he'd talk to me about serious, theological things. Well, didn't understand much of it but I was so honored that he thought that this little teenager could understand and grasp these great concepts. I studied hard and listened hard when he preached. I was so honored that he didn't talk down to me. And I praise God for it. Mrs. Miller died at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning. He was praising Betty toward the end of his life to me when we'd go out to eat. What a blessing.

And then Don Patterson came and by the grace of God was able to formulate with others the Declaration of Commitment and lead us out of the PCUS into the continuing church which became the Presbyterian Church in America. His passion not only was the PCA but missions. He loved missions so greatly. I thought of Alexander Pope. Alexander Pope said, "A master passion in the breast like Aaron's rod consumes the rest." And one day he stood up here and said — there was a missions conference, everybody walked forward who was going to the mission field and he got out of the pulpit and walked forward. He gave himself to the Lord and spent the last years of his life, took a tremendous cut in salary, to serve the Lord. I was with him right before he died. The family gave me Gene's Bible. I found she'd prayed for me many a time. He hired me on May - I came here on May 1, 1983.

And then after Don, Jim Baird came and which we built the Fellowship Hall and the Study Center and Miller Hall. Jim started these Mid-South Men's Conferences, a huge blessed thing that attracts many people from several states, all over the state; a great blessing. He was the first one to take a group of people behind the Iron Curtain into missions work. What a blessing. What a blessing Jim has proved to be to me and he's still active. He's still preaching. He's preached all over the world and we thank God for him.

And then Dr. Duncan has been with us, the youngest moderator of the General Assembly, internationally known author, leader of conferences such as Together for the Gospel, started the Twin Lakes fellowship for where two weeks men from all over the United States will come to Twin Lakes to be strengthened in the Lord. What a blessing he has been — his sermons, his friendship. And under his ministry the officers of our church have become real shepherds. I was interviewing one of the ladies who recently joined our church. And her elder who was interviewing her with me, after we finished going through everything, leaned out and looked her in the eye, and he said, calling her name, "I am your shepherd. Call on me for anything, anytime. It will be my privilege to serve you faithfully. Call on me. I am your shepherd." It touched my heart because this guy really is a shepherd, better than most of us preachers. Seriously, he is.

I'll just sum up by saying a few things. Had not our people of a long history given

sacrificially to fund this church, had not Dr. Miller organized the presbytery, had not the session of this church established Reformed Theological Seminary that sent men out so that they could get into churches and so they'd be willing, most of them, to move into the PCA, had not Don Patterson led the way, had not the Declaration of Commitment been presented on October 4, 1989, a great challenge was laid down, had not Morton Smith and Bob Cannada not written *The Book of Church Order*, had not this church stood with its session and pastor in those great days, how different, how different history of the Presbyterian Church in this state and the world would be.

Both chapters, Deuteronomy and 2 Timothy chapter 2, end with a warning. Deuteronomy 8 ends with a solemn warning. "If you forget, if you don't remember but forget, then what's been done to the nations that you invaded and that I enabled you," God says, "to conquer, will be done to you if you don't remember." And then the apostle Paul warns Timothy that some of his converts, some of the ones that he trusted, had turned against him. He says, "You are aware that all who are in Asia" — that's the western part of the Roman Empire then — "all who were in Asia turned away from me among whom were the jealous but the Lord granted mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he refreshed me and he was not ashamed of my chains. He came to Rome and found me and comforted me but I lost a whole lot of them. They turned against me; they rejected me." Let me tell you, if the apostle Paul had people reject him, should we be that surprised? No, the Lord Jesus, one of His Twelve, rejected Him.

Who would have thought that God, in His sovereign mercy, would have taken a church from the poorest state in the Union, from the most belittled state in the Union and somehow caused it to be the catalyst, maybe the indispensable catalyst, of a great denomination, or a glorious seminary, or a mission program, of a Day School that reaches, to strengthen our college nearby, our college ministry. We think of the days of Jimmy Turner here with the great youth program and of so many others.

Two weeks from today we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of a great historical event. On April 15, a huge magnificent vessel was coursing through the Atlantic Ocean seven hundred miles east of Halifax, Nova Scotia in two and a half miles deep water. We don't want to blame all of this on captain E.J. Smith because it was a standard procedure when you saw an iceberg you went around it; you didn't slow down. You just evaded it. Even though he had had seven warnings of the danger of icebergs he was following the standard procedure of the White Star Line and the Kinard Line of those days. They put a lookout up in the front of the ship way up on a pole in a crow's nest. His name was Fredrick Fleet. There was another man with him. It was a beautiful night, starlit. It was very unusual because the sea was as smooth as glass, not a ripple. Nobody could ever remember seeing it so smooth. How nice. Nice? No, it wasn't, because that deceptive smoothness, calm, would cost the lives of over a thousand people very soon because standard procedure was to rely upon the



eyes of the lookouts to see the iceberg but they couldn't see it that night because the sea was so smooth the breakers around the bottom, which form the white, frothy surf, could not be seen because it was so smooth; there were none. And so when they saw it, it was too late. They struck the iceberg. It was at twenty minutes to twelve on April 14th and it sank at twenty minutes after two on April 15th.

So when God puts storms in your life, don't fight Him. Better stormy seas with Christ than clear sailing without Him. As the young people were singing tonight, "God will bless our troubles and sanctify to us our deepest distress." What a blessing. As we look back over the 175 years, I remember the words of Andre Crouch:

I've had many tears and sorrows; I've had questions for tomorrows. There's been time I didn't know right from wrong, but in every situation God gave blessed consolation that my trials only come to make me strong. Through it all, through it all, O I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word. My Father's way may twist and turn, my heart may throb and break, but in my soul I'm glad I know He maketh no mistake. My cherished plans may go astray, my hopes may fade away, but in my heart I'm glad I know He maketh no mistake. There's so much more I cannot see, my eyesight's far too dim. And so I'll simply trust and leave it all to Him, for by and by the mist will lift and plain it all He'll make, through all the way, though dark to me, He made not one mistake.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply. The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design, thy dross to consume, thy gold to refine. The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to its foes. That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never, forsake.

Thank God for 175 years which we begin celebrating this night. May we be faithful to remember and to not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. May we pray.

*Lord, we thank You for Your Word. We thank Thee for Your promises and for the 175 years here and for our pastors and our leaders in this church. What a privilege, Lord, to be here. May we be faithful to Thee and to Thy Church until death. For Christ's sake, amen.*

The benediction and then the hymn.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you now and forevermore.

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