

# Confronting the past: Why International Holocaust Remembrance Day matters

## TRANSCRIPT

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**NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.**

**Dr. Mark Turman:** [00:00:00]

This is the Denison Forum Podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, joining you today as host, and we're sitting down again with the Drs. Denison, Dr. Ryan Denison, who is our resident scholar in church history and theology, and also the founder CEO of our ministry, Dr. Jim Denison. Drs. Denison, good morning. Welcome back to the podcast.

**Dr. Jim Denison:** Well, thank you very much. I should point out that Ryan's wife, Dr. Candice Denison, who's a dentist, was a doctor before Ryan was. However, Ryan had a master's degree before Candice, and so he considers a master to trump a doctor, and so there's a bit of a marital tension there. I thought everybody should know that.

Aren't you glad I got, I shared that tidbit, Ryan, with

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** Yeah, always good. Always good.

**Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, happy to help.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Well, yeah, and as we've talked before, right, you know, at least some of us hold doctor's degrees that, you know, at least our children and grandchildren think, well, that doesn't really help anybody. It doesn't make [00:01:00] anybody better, you know, whereas Candace is much more equipped to help a lot of

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** Very much so. It's a much more practical degree in some ways.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** So, well, we're glad to have y'all with us again today and just have a conversation. We're going to talk about remembering. We referred to this in a previous podcast recently. The Bible says a lot to us about both remembering and forgetting, and we're going to get to that application a little bit down the road.

But Ryan, I just wanted to start you've done a lot of work, a PhD in church history. Just wanted to talk a little bit about your understanding, of just the way I've framed it, both **the blessing and the responsibility of remembering**. Talk a little bit about that from your biblical studies and your framework of church

history.

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** Thank you. Yeah, I think one of the great things about history and knowing our history is that it gives just a sense of perspective that can be very helpful in the midst of the trying times that we face either today or at any point. [00:02:00] Whenever trials come, if you can look back and see how people who face something similar and especially biblically how God has brought them through it.

It can give us just a sense of reassurance and a sense of confidence in him that he can do it again. But so often also what you see if you look through the Bible and all the accounts there of the way that God has saved people. Oftentimes you also see ways that people messed it up, and ways that people either made God's job more difficult in that regard, or rejected his attempts at saving them, attempts at helping them.

And so I think it can be instructive both, history can be instructive both in terms of things that we can do better, but also in terms of giving us examples of ways that people have done well, and I think both are important.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** So let me, let me build on that a little bit. So, the Bible doesn't explicitly tell us that we should celebrate Jesus's birthday, and there's some things that we could talk about in terms of how Jesus's birthday ended up being on December 25th as the day that we observe it. The Bible doesn't explicitly tell us.

That I know of, that we should [00:03:00] celebrate Easter at the specific time that we do. Do you think it's good for us to do that? Do you think it's helpful to have at least those two rhythms and days of remembrance? what's the benefit of having those every

12 months?

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** I think they're great. And you said it is interesting to see kind of the history behind how they came around and when they started to be celebrated. Because one of the reasons we don't know when Jesus was born is that the early church didn't really celebrate it. It wasn't until kind of the 300s and Constantine was looking for ways to help expand the faith and bring more people into the fold that, Christmas really became, got dated at December 25th and that was done to try and, because there was a lot, a lot of the pagan gods, you did celebrate their birthdays. And so this was a way to kind of make Christianity more appealing. But I think for us

today, whether it's Christmas or Easter or any of these other holidays, they serve an important purpose in terms of just giving us little landmarks to reorient our faith.

And because so [00:04:00] often when we stray from our faith, it happens gradually. And one of the things that these days of remembrance, whether it's what we're going to about today with the Holocaust Remembrance Day, or even just the biblical celebrations and feast days, they're intended just to kind of refocus, I think, and help us refocus on God, help us remember what our faith is supposed to be about, and reorient our lives accordingly.

And having those moments where we, we can just look at a calendar and just know that, okay, today is going to be a day when I can recalibrate that. It doesn't have to be a holy day. It doesn't have to, we don't have to wait for Christmas or Easter, but they do kind of help guarantee that at least twice a year, we're going to have a time where we can be motivated and to sit back and look and reflect on our faith and make sure that we're oriented in the right direction with it.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, and I, you know, I suspect everybody that is listening to this is gonna they're gonna have some reminders in their day and in their week, right? Their calendar reminders, you know, I, I'm carrying around in my pocket a post it note [00:05:00] for an errand that I was given for my wife and I'm carrying the, the post it note to make sure that I don't turn up at home tonight for dinner and have to answer up that I didn't remember to do what she asked me to do when I was out.

Moving around today. And so, we all have this wonderful gift of memory, but we also all need reminders for a lot of different things. Jim, as we come into the beginning of this new year, we have some pretty big reminders. Obviously Christmas and New Year's, but we already have had the reminder of Martin Luther King Jr. 's birthday, which kind of becomes the introduction for what February marks, which is Black History Month, African American History Month. And we remember Dr. King's life around that we had recently Sanctity of Human Life Sunday as a reminder to us about the Gift of Life. But Ryan's already referred to it.

We're going to talk today in depth about Holocaust, what we commonly call Holocaust Remembrance Day which is coming up on the 27th, which [00:06:00] will actually be about the time we release this podcast. Jim, you, you've written a lot about Israel and and your love for the Jewish people. Give us a framework and a context.

**What is Holocaust Remembrance Day and why is it on the 27th of January?**

**Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, International Holocaust Remembrance Day was designated by the United Nations for January 27th, because that's the day that the Soviet soldiers liberated Auschwitz Birkenau, which was the largest of the concentration camps. More than a million victims murdered at Auschwitz specifically. The Soviets didn't know that that was going on there. They didn't know what they were going to find until they actually came to Auschwitz and

discovered several thousand survivors that were still there. So because of that, because of the 27th, that's been designated every year International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

But a couple of things to say, having been to Israel more than 30 times over the years, praying every day for 7 and all that. First of all, they don't typically refer to this as the [00:07:00] Holocaust. That word holocaust comes from true Greek words, which have to do with the idea of a whole burning, but typically refers to a sacrificial offering. Well, the sacrificial offering is a voluntary decision. I choose to sacrifice something. I choose to give money at church.

I choose to sacrifice on an altar in the Jewish system, sacrificial system, and no one, Of the six million Jews and the six million other victims of the Nazis chose to be a sacrifice. None of them chose to be a victim. And so my Jewish friends refer to that horrific tragedy as the Shoah, which is a Hebrew word for catastrophe.

They typically don't like to have it be called the Holocaust, because again, that would signify that they intended to do this, or in some way participated in this, or went along with this on some passive level, and that's categorically untrue. So they'll call it the Shoah, not the Holocaust. And the second thing to mention, Yad Vashem, which is the dedication in Jerusalem to the victims of the [00:08:00] Shoah, is typically called the Holocaust museum, but again, they don't refer to it that way. Yad Vashem in the Hebrew means a memorial and a name, and it exists first and foremost to preserve the names of the six million Jews that were slaughtered by the Nazis. In the Jewish culture, one of the most significant ways you are remembered into the future is by your descendants, by your children and your grandchildren.

Well, so many of the victims of the Shoah didn't have children. A fourth of the Shoah victims were themselves children. And so Yad Vashem exists first and foremost to preserve their names, to tell their stories, to be a memorial for the victims of the Nazis, and then secondarily, to explain how this happened so that it will never happen again.

It simply takes you chronologically from the rise of Hitler and the beginning of anti-Semitism in the 20th century and moves you chronologically through all the way to World War II and the other side of it. And then, Mark, [00:09:00] I know you've been to the Holocaust Museum, as it's called, Yad Vashem. Ryan, I believe you've been there as well, when you went with us to Israel.

As you know, at the end of this, if you zigzag back and forth all through the displays, you come out at the very end at a kind of a portico, looking out at West Jerusalem, looking out at this thriving Jewish metropolis. Every time I do it, it's so moving to me to say, the Jews won, the Nazis lost.

Despite this horrific atrocity, this Shoah, they did not exterminate the Jews. And look. At the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people today, it's an incredibly moving thing. But again, it's not a Holocaust museum. It's a memorial and a name to remember the victims and to tell us the story so

that it could never happen Again, one of the most important things in all the world to do I think is a visit yad vashem and to experience that personally

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Jim, you talk about this in very clear terms, such a beautiful understanding of that. But, [00:10:00] um The, the catastrophe that was exercised against the Jews by the Nazis is one of the most vivid and most recent, I guess, expressions of genocide, the attempt to eliminate an entire culture of people.

But it's not the only one in recent history or in all of history. Why, why is it, do you think it's important that we remember that we take time to focus on what happened to the Jews in the context of World War II under the Nazis? Wouldn't it be appropriate to mark other genocidal attempts as well?

**Dr. Jim Denison:** It would be, and in fact, that's the thing that's commonly being done, and I think more and more being done as we're understanding more about various genocides that have occurred in recent history as well. The reason this one, I guess, is especially significant is because of the numbers, first of all, and second, because of the systematic nature by which this was done.

And third, because it was done in the context of Western European civilization. A number of the [00:11:00] other genocides that we're thinking about happened in very different cultural settings. They might have been tribal genocidal acts that you would think of in Africa, or you could think of as massacres by dictatorial lunatics such as Pol Pot and things that happened in Southeast Asia.

But this was Europeans. These were so called Christians, or so they would have claimed themselves to be. These in Germany are the heirs of some of the most brilliant thinkers, some of the most, some of the greatest genius is really in Western history. How could this happen? Because if it could happen, then it could happen today.

If it could happen to the Jews, then it can happen to the Jews today. And it's happening to the Jews today. We're seeing a greater rise of antisemitism in Europe today than at any time since the Shoah. It is simply a fact that human nature doesn't change. So understanding how this happened is critical.

In order to keep it from happening again, because Mark, if we don't take such steps, [00:12:00] then the very factors that brought this about are still present today. And we're going to see, and are seeing some of the same responses as a result. So much of genocide as it was fueled by the Nazis was out of an Aryan super race kind of mythology that said that we are a superior people and the Jews are inferior, but the Jews are keeping us from experiencing our superiority.

They're keeping us from this place of exalted sort of Third Reich kind of global domination that should be ours. And so it's painting the other as my enemy. As the reason I'm not in the position I wish to be so that by destroying him, by defeating him, by castigating him, I'm advancing myself. Well, that's basic fallen human nature.

You see that in racial prejudice. You said that in economic, you see that in systemic prejudice. We see that as a part of fallen human nature and we still see it today. So understanding what happened then is critical to keeping it from happening today because it's still happening today. It's not just Hamas genocidal acts on October the 7th.[00:13:00]

It's not just what Hezbollah is doing to the north It's not just what Iran wishes to do to eradicate Israel. It's what's happening in Western Europe. It's what's happening in France It's what happened. What's happening on college campuses all across America today Because human nature doesn't change.

I'll, I'll mention this Kurt Tokolsky's quote. I see it every time I go to Yad Vashem and it moves me every time. He says, a nation is not just what it does. It is also what it tolerates. That I think is a prophetic word.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, it is, and it may, it reminds me of what our friend Ruben said on a recent podcast with him that you can dismantle the organization of Hamas, but the idea remains. And

**Dr. Jim Denison:** The idea is in the heart, as he

**Dr. Mark Turman:** and that's what we see going on is that even if you can in some ways be successful about dismantling the current organization, the idea and that same sense of superiority and hatred still exists and will perpetually have to be dealt with.

Ryan, you mentioned [00:14:00] before we started our conversation in recording that there was kind of a back and forth tug of war around choosing the 27th as, the International Day, and even among our Jewish friends, there was disagreement about what day should be selected because it, it wasn't just a day or an event, it was a prolonged period of four years from at least 1941 to 1945.

Explain a little bit about how that conversation in tug of war that ultimately arrived at January 27th, what was that about?

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** Thank you.

And uh, one of the first dates that people looked at was a date in April that coincided with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which that was fueled by a secular Israeli Zionist who wanted to find a

way to remember the Holocaust without having the focus be on all the horrors that occurred to them.

They wanted to find an example of Israeli strength and Jewish strength within that. And so that's why they looked to the Warsaw Ghetto But the more Orthodox [00:15:00] Jews rejected that date because it coincided with Passover, or at least was close enough to Passover, that they didn't want to conflate the, the celebration of God's salvation with the remembrance of all the atrocities that were committed against them.

And this, I think that's, it's a helpful reminder of just all the factors that go into the. Go into this and how the event can mean different things for so many different people and how so much of it is about what you're, what you want to remember from it and whether you, and what serves the greatest purpose behind that.

And I think that's a conversation that's still going on today to an extent, even with the settled date is what is the, what should the modern purpose of a Holocaust Remembrance Day be? And remember, I think it's helpful to note that that hasn't been, that's not a recent thing where it wasn't settled.

That hasn't really been settled from the start.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, and continues today. Jim one of the questions that Ryan and I were tossing around getting ready for this conversation has to do with how to engage in [00:16:00] this remembrance. How would we do that appropriately without as Ryan referenced to the idea of virtue signaling? I'm not even sure I understand the term virtue signaling, although I've heard it used and tossed around in our culture quite a bit.

What's, what's the right way to walk up toward this particular moment of remembrance and, and others that would be similar to it without it being virtue signaling?

**Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, thank you. Virtue signaling as the name I guess would imply, is an act for the purpose of impressing you with my virtue. I'm going to do this only so that you will like me better, be more impressed with me because I did it. In this context, I would be thinking about International Holocaust Remembrance Day in a virtue signaling way only to impress you with my transparency with my compassion for people, with my love for all people, with my, even my solidarity with the, with the Jewish people.

I could be engaging in this conversation to impress you with how much I love the Jewish people, I suppose.[00:17:00] And so if my motive is to impress you with me, then that would be virtue signaling, I guess. You could judge my actions in that direction, but if that wasn't my motive, then that wouldn't, I think, be a fair accusation.

So, rather than doing this to impress you with something about me, the right way to do this, I think, comes on three levels. The first thing is to do what the Bible says, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. To take this as an opportunity, not just on an annual basis, but I think even on a daily basis, that's an ongoing command in the Hebrew, to pray, to intercede.

For the Jewish people, especially in light of October 7, especially with the seven front war that they're engaged in today, a war that is literally for the future of the nation of Israel. To be interceding and use the international holocaust remembrance day as a reminder to be able to do that to be a person of intercession Second to use our media platforms such as we have them to advocate for the jewish people not to the detriment of others Not to say that god loves the jews more than the palestinians not to say [00:18:00] that I agree with everything the israeli government has ever done.

I'm not saying that, but I'm saying that nonetheless, I want to use my influence to stand with and for this persecuted people and all persecuted people. I want to stand against all forms of discrimination, all forms of racism, all forms of injustice. And I want to use my platform in ways that give me an opportunity to speak that voice.

And then third, to find a practical way beyond using my influence where I can be engaged in a redemptive way within my own capacities, within my own abilities and resources. I'm thinking of reaching out to Jewish friends. I'm thinking of reaching out to a rabbi in the community and, and voicing a word of solidarity and asking if there are other ways that I could be helpful or encouraging.

I'm thinking of ways to provide means of encouragement and assistance to those that are in the midst of this issue. There are more than 245, 000 Holocaust survivors, Shoah survivors still alive today. More than [00:19:00] 245, 000 percent live in Israel. But then others of them live in other places in the world.

About 12 percent or so live in the United States. Wouldn't be hard to find agencies we could support who were serving them. Ministries that are supporting them. I'm thinking of my friend, Tom Doyle, Tom and Joanne Doyle, that are missionaries to the Middle East and have a specific outreach to show us survivors in the Middle East.

And I'm certain could use our intercession and our financial support. And so ways that I can be involved practically ways I could use my influence and ways I can intercede. would be practical responses to this conversation that I think would honor the Lord and help to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** and feel and what you just shared is that because of October 7th this year particularly feels different and any would like both of you to respond to that a little bit in terms of it certainly has that sense for me and recent conversations that we've had as well as recent trips



before the conflict with Hamas [00:20:00] anything else that you want to share in that Jim and then Ryan would like you to react to that. Well, how, how does this feel different because of where we are and because of what's happened over the last hundred days or so since October 7th what else about it feels different going into January Jim?

**Dr. Jim Denison:** I can tell you how it feels different to the Israelis. And this is out of our conversation with Ruben recently and other things that I've read as well as Ruben said, and I hope everybody goes back to hear that podcast. If you haven't heard the podcast conversation we had with Reuben Nevo, I would urge you to do that, especially in light of Holocaust Remembrance Day, but I would just urge you to do it.

He's so brilliant. He's such a remarkable person. He's been a longtime tour guide in Israel. He's been one of my dearest friends for 25 years. I love Reuben. Reuben and Sandy are two of my dearest friends and just such a brilliant communicator speaking in his third language when he's doing this in English And he just I just thought the conversation was remarkable So I'd urge anybody to go back and hear it But he made the point that October 7 taught the Jews in Israel that for 20 years they've [00:21:00] been living under the wrong concept That's the way he put it for 20 years.

They've been thinking that they could appease Hamas By offering financial incentives and work release programs and things like that and that the Israeli Defense Force would protect them from any large scale incursions by Hamas or others into Israel. And now they know that's not true. So now the Israeli people for the first time, really since World War II and the founding of Israel live on a state of fear and a state of, of tension and anxiety that makes them understand that the Shoah is more a realistic possibility today than a month or a hundred days ago, they thought it was.

They really did believe that the IDF, because of its advanced sophistication, because of its remarkable, remarkable capacities, could protect them on the level that now they know it couldn't. And so that makes the Shoah a more existential threat for them than would have been the case, I think, prior to October the 7th.

And that makes our standing [00:22:00] with them and for them in solidarity even more an urgent invitation and opportunity for the rest of us as well.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** So it's been, the events of the last hundred days have been a very sobering, if not humbling experience for them, especially from the standpoint of military strength and, and this, like you said, sense of security that had grown up over the last 20 years or so. And that's, that's a very significant pivot for all of our Jewish friends, but should also be in some ways for all of us an awareness of where our security really needs to come from, which is. from our relationship with Christ and not from others. Ryan, how, how does it seem different to you going into remembrance day over the last a hundred days in that context.

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** It certainly seems more, more relevant, I suppose, in a way that it's not, it doesn't just feel like a one day event where we can think back on something that happened a long time ago, but would never happen again. And I think one of one of the reasons [00:23:00] that the Holocaust was able to happen during World War II, Is that there was a latent anti semitism that ran throughout most of the Western world for the preceding that as well.

And I think one of the things you see in the Holocaust is that they chose a group to persecute that most people were already somewhat hesitant or wary of, and I think one of the things you see in the culture today with the rise of anti semitism, the reason that's so dangerous is that it's recreating the environment, to at least some extent that enabled that in the first place.

And I think October 7th reminded us that. Oftentimes, when that sort of sentiment exists, it just takes a spark to ignite it into something much bigger and make it go much, much farther beyond what you would normally think would be possible. I would imagine most people in Israel didn't think that what happened when Hamas first attacked was actually a viable possibility until it happened.

And I think one of the things that Holocaust Remembrance Day can, should do for us this year is [00:24:00] remind us that we're not as far away from those kinds of events as we like to think. And it's a reminder that a lot of the anti semitism we see today, whether it's, it's latent, whether it's rising, whether there's reasons that people used to justify it, all of it , creates an environment in which those kinds of events are more possible than they should be.

And I think that's something that we, that should be a focus for today and something that hits differently as a result of what happened in Israel last October.

**Dr. Jim Denison:** And Mark, if I could add this real quickly, I think it also makes the point that what's happening to the Jews can happen to anybody.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Right. Yeah.

**Dr. Jim Denison:** We're seeing a rising discrimination against evangelical Christians in our culture, certainly not on the level of anti Semitism. Of course not that we're talking about relative to the Holocaust, but nonetheless, a rising discrimination that says that evangelical Christians are dangerous to society.

We're seeing a rising sense of legal threats against basic freedoms of speech and freedoms of religious practice that are especially in Western Europe [00:25:00] happening and in Canada and to a degree happening in the United States as well. A growing sense of us as intolerant threats to flourishing of society and such in that.

It reminds me of Martin Niemöller, the German pastor who was in prison during the Holocaust and made a statement in in a rather poetic manner. That's also displayed at Yad Vashem. And it's

something else I stand in front of whenever I'm there. He famously said, when they came for the socialists, I did not speak up because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak up for me.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Yes.

**Dr. Jim Denison:** Once we understand the solidarity of humanity as God does, that God loves each of us as if there were only one of us, then we understand how this is an existential issue for all of us, and that if this can happen to the Jews, it can happen to anyone, and in fact it did.

The Nazis murdered as many non Jews as they did Jews. We don't [00:26:00] often hear that. More than 3 million Russians that were murdered by the Nazis as well, and a large number of others also. And so what happened to the Jews can happen to anyone. And that's why this is an existential issue for all of us.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** And I think it was, it may have been Martin Luther King who said that the loss of any person diminishes all of us. And realizing that we share in that solidarity, but also that we're, we're all tempted in this direction of superiority that ultimately can lead to anger, can lead to grievance, can lead to hate and the desire for revenge.

And like I said, if it can happen to one group of people it can happen to any group of people.

Let me move the conversation a little bit. I had an experience a few years ago. I had the opportunity to visit Germany. and went back to the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation uh, in Wittenberg, but then had a time to spend in Berlin, was my first experience of being in Berlin.

Got to see the Shoah [00:27:00] Remembrance Memorial that is in the middle of the city of Berlin, which was a profound place to visit in and of itself. Around the city were remnants and expressions of the Berlin Wall that had been left in place. And as I just walked throughout the city, I intuitively had the sense that it was almost like the, the city itself the streets, the wall the memorial, it's almost like they were speaking silently, and when I tried to describe it to my wife and family, I said it was, it was almost as if the German people had put these monuments and memorials in place as a way of saying, you There is no way that we can say we're sorry, big enough, loud enough, or strong enough. But we can place these things in a way that express our ongoing and continuous sense of grief and of repentance. At least that's what I was hoping [00:28:00] that I was sensing as I moved in and in, even in the city of Berlin they have purposely left some of their historic buildings damaged. I'm thinking of one particular church that a bomb had taken out, you know, at least a third of the steeple and the, the tower of this church, but they had, they had reconstructed and made the church active again, useful again, but they had left the damage as a partial memorial to this grievous part of their history which kind of sets up the

conversation a little bit from the idea of days of Remembrance memorials that would be like in Berlin and in other places. Let's talk a little bit about the connection of of the obligation to remember, the reality that may be pointing to guilt or the desire to improve or to remember well so as to not repeat the same mistakes that we've talked about already.

How is all of that [00:29:00] interconnected? And so that's a big way of coming around to saying, Jim, sort all that out for us. Is should there be a sense of guilt? A sense of shame? Does that, is it necessary to have that in order to get to a place where you're resolved to not let those kinds of things happen again, personally or collectively?

How would you think about that?

**Dr. Jim Denison:** That's a great question. It's on two levels. I think as regards our relationship with God, I've often say guilt is not of God, that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. He doesn't condemn us as sinners and scriptures is very clear when it says that we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Bible says that God separates our sin from us as far as the East is from the West, buries it in the depths of the deepest sea, and Isaiah 43, 25 says he remembers it no more. So the next time I confess a sin I've already confessed, God doesn't know what I'm talking about.

I love John Claypool's story about this Catholic priest who was very, very troubled by a sin that he had [00:30:00] committed in seminary. Even though he confessed it, he still felt the guilt of it. One day a woman in his church came to him with a very strange announcement that God had begun speaking to her audibly. Well, he was suitably skeptical and he said to her, I wouldn't have said this, but he said to her, well, the next time God is speaking, you ask him what sin your priest committed in seminary.

I don't think I'd have done that, but in the story he did. She said she would. She came back to see him the next week. He asked, is God still speaking audibly to you? She said, yes. He said, did you ask what sin I committed in seminary? She said, yes. The priest said, what did God say? She said, the Lord said, I don't remember.

And so there's a sense in which guilt is not of God relative to our relationship with him, but relative to guilt and shame in a collective sense that you're describing it in the sense of Germany in its response to the atrocities of World War II, this collective sense of guilt or shame, I think can be a very valuable thing.

So there's a sense in which guilt and shame in a collective sense can, I think, be redemptive and [00:31:00] valuable. It's a way of the German people saying, look, what happened in the Shoah wasn't a handful of people. It wasn't something the rest of us had no idea about or participation in.

It wasn't something that could never happen again. And so for us collectively to remember where the Berlin Wall was, and I've seen that as you have, I've seen where Checkpoint Charlie was, I've seen what's left of that wall. For us to keep some of the buildings as they are. And by the way, some of the Brits have done the same thing.

I'm thinking of Coventry Cathedral that was never fully rebuilt as a remembrance of what happened as well. It's a way of us as a nation saying, we're going to keep remembering this. So that we can make sure we don't do it again, as we've been talking about together. So if there's that sense of guilt or shame, that can be a redemptive way of remembering in a very visible, very visual sense.

So that this doesn't happen again, as I said, in a collective sense going forward. So there's that sense in which I think God redeems that sense of guilt and shame. There's a sense in which the consequences of sin remain. It's a fact that God forgets our sin, but we [00:32:00] can't, we don't. You drive a nail into the wood, you pull it out, but the hole's still there.

One of the reasons Evan Esses is a pastor over the years why the wrong answer to sin isn't to say, well, if I said, I can just confess that and God will forgive it and forget it. So why don't I just keep sinning, like Paul said in response to that, may it never be God forbid. Well, one reason is the consequences of sin are very real.

I can confess. And he said, I've committed against you, Mark, but the chances are the consequences of that sin will remain even after God's forgiveness. And I have at the very least forfeited a sense of reward in heaven I would have received for obedience during that time I was committing that sin. Even if I've confessed it, God's forgiven it, God's forgotten it, but I've lost the reward that would have happened there.

That's kind of the gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, and straw that Paul's referred to refers to in first Corinthians three, I think. So there are all these reasons. Why simply confessing our sin and claiming God's forgiveness isn't an easy out that would say we therefore can just sin and [00:33:00] confess and sin and confess.

But on a collective sense, the sense of guilt and shame that the Germans are manifesting is I think an appropriate thing for us again to remember what's happened so we can keep it from happening again. And that's not unique to the Germans. I'm hoping that we will do more. We're doing some, but I hope we'll do more to remember what was done to Japanese Americans and the kind of concentration camps into which they were forced during World War Two, nothing like the atrocities of Europe, of course, but nonetheless, forced illegal detentions that were committed against Japanese Americans in World War Two. I'm hoping we'll tell more of that story. I'm hoping we'll continue to tell stories of the consequences of slavery in this country.

And so this is an ongoing act of continuing to try to get better and all the while trusting the redemptive purpose of God.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** And as we talked recently with our friend Tyrone Johnson about Black History Month and that type of thing, if people listening to us understand, we're not talking about [00:34:00] revising history as much as we are talking about expanding history. And what happened to Asian Americans in the Second World War is a part of that is.

There's just so, there's just so much to history. Some of, sometimes there are efforts to intentionally hide portions of it. But sometimes there's just not enough time or capacity. And that's why we have to continue to expand history and to tell all of the stories as much as we possibly can.

Jim, I want you to chase out one thought for me because this has been pretty consistent in our culture over the last number of years this whole deal about guilt and shame. Help us understand, for a moment or two, the clarity. The Bible says that the Spirit of God comes to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Help us understand the biblical difference between when God convicts us of our sin and how that is different from the ideas of guilt and shame.

**Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah. Thank you. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, this is a very specific thing. It's not sin [00:35:00] generically. It's not the Holy Spirit coming along and saying, you're a terrible person. You're a bad person. You're a sinner. It's not like that at all. It's the Holy Spirit bringing to mind very specific sinful acts that we have committed.

If we'll ask him to do that, he'll do that. I would encourage us on a regular basis to keep what's called a spiritual inventory where you take a piece of paper and a pen, get alone with the Lord for a bit of time and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anything you need to confess and write down what comes to your thoughts.

God will do that. He will. He's in my life done this very, very specifically. He convicts of specific sin, but he does that as a means to the end of our confessing it so that we can be forgiven and take redemptive steps going forward. He does this in the same sense that an oncologist doesn't condemn a cancer patient.

Rather, he, he identifies a specific malignancy and he does that so that that malignancy can be treated so it can be removed so that that cancer cell can be killed so that the [00:36:00] patient can survive. A very dear friend of mine just recently went through a liver transplant because of cancer in his liver and we're praying every day for him to continue to recover it.

So far, there's really good news in the midst of this. Well, when the doctors diagnosed his condition, they didn't condemn him for having cancer. They pointed out the specific kind of

cancer he had and took redemptive steps to deal with it so as to save him as a patient. That's what the Holy Spirit does as kind of the great physician of our souls.

He very specifically points out sin so we can confess and be forgiven. Satan does the opposite. Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. It's Satan who condemns us as sinners. It's Satan who loves to tempt us to sin and then condemn us as sinners. Guilt is of Satan. The next time you confess a sin to God that you've already confessed, he won't remember what you're talking about.

You'll be doing that as an act of trying to pay for the forgiveness God has already bestowed. I don't like to be forgiven without paying for [00:37:00] my debt. If I backed into your car, Mark, and you said, well, don't worry about it. I couldn't handle that. I'd have to pay for it, right? If you backed your truck into mine, that's okay with me.

I can forgive that. I've got insurance. But if I back into your truck, well, I've got to do something about that. Well, if I confess my sin to God and he can, and he forgives me for it, that bothers me that I have been a recipient of, of unmerited favor here. So I have to pay for that somehow. And I do it with guilt.

Guilt is how I punish myself for the sins God has forgiven enough that eventually think I've earned the forgiveness that I've received. And it's how Satan continues to punish me for my past so I can't live more redemptively in the future. It's how Satan continues to beat us up over the very things he tempted us to do.

So in those two senses, Satan condemns us and we condemn ourselves. God doesn't do either one of those. God convicts of sin by the Holy Spirit so that he can then free us from that sin. So that we can then experience the abundant life of Christ.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Wow. Super helpful. Super helpful in that way. And [00:38:00] really appreciate you offering that. You know, we, we only have a few more minutes and so I, I want to find a way to, to bring this into some personal application. So Ryan, I just want to, again, with your knowledge of the Bible and the Bible's history, the Old Testament had all kinds of remembrances in it, all kinds of moments as well as festivals, feasts, celebrations, fasts, that type of thing.

What does this look like, not only in reference to the catastrophe reminder about what happened to the Jews and to others as well, , should these kinds of remembrance moments be a practice, a rhythm that Christians participate in?

When I was thinking about this conversation the passage in Colossians 2 came to my mind that. That says simply this, therefore do not let anyone judge you about what you eat or drink or with regard to religious festival new Moon celebration or Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things that are to come. The [00:39:00] reality, however, is found in Christ. There's a similar kind of

reference through the Holy Spirit writing, using the Apostle Paul to write these words and some things in Romans 14 about this.

Do you think this is a good practice, the idea of remembrances? How might it be applied to our lives as believers and as churches, gatherings of believers, the idea of remembrances? You might in some way, you might even be able to make the case that every Sunday morning gathering is an act of remembrance.

And that's part of the reason that we should do it, but is this, how do we how do we understand the New Testament applications, particularly Colossians 2 when it comes to the practice and, and spiritual rhythm even of remembrance?

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** Thank you. And I think the short answer is that they're worth doing if they're done well, and if they're done for the right What y'all talked about earlier with the virtue signaling, I think one of the dangers of that is it makes you feel like you've done something when you haven't. [00:40:00] And that's so much of what we see with, that's the temptation to, to days like this, is to days like the Holocaust Remembrance Day or any of the old, any of the feasts and the remembrance as the scripture talks about, is that they serve, they're intended to serve a specific purpose of drawing you closer to God helping you remember what He's done for you so that you can trust Him more going forward.

For days like Holocaust Remembrance Day, they're meant to help us remember what humanity is capable of. And if they are focused entirely on other people and on the atrocities other people have committed, then I think part of that message is lost. Like, when the Allies liberated the concentration camps, one of the first things they did was go to the surrounding villages and bring the German citizens back to show them what was going on, just outside their city's borders. And I think part of the reason for that was to let was to make sure that they understood even though you were not participating this directly. You had a responsibility to do something. James talks it's a sin to know the [00:41:00] right thing to do and not do it. And I think so much of Remembrance Days are intended to help us focus more on not only what we should do, but remember why we're do it.

In Zechariah 7, for example, God is God is asked, like, should we continue these Remembrance Days 68 years after the exile? Should we still continue Remembrance Days? For when the Babylonians took us away and God's response is who are you doing that for essentially like when you fasted when you feasted who are you doing that for who are you thinking about and like was it me and the rhetorical question is meant to imply that it was not and I think so often today like the our days of remembrance serve a purpose that's other than what God intended.

And if we can do it well, though, then I think it provides the Lord an opportunity to work in our hearts, to work in our lives, and to help us examine any ways that while we may not have committed These terrible sins that we're remembering to help us remember we are capable of it



and to remember that apart [00:42:00] from God's grace that it's that old saying like apart from God's grace there go I kind of idea with approach to sin that so if we do them well they should remind us of who we are in Christ of who God has saved us and created us to be but also of if we're not living in his strength of what we're capable of and I think both of those should be part of our remembrances.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** And it makes me think that there, like so many other, like every other part of our lives and our human nature, there's, there's a way that we can misuse our ability to remember. We, we can misuse it for our own purposes. And maybe that's where Paul's corrective or the, or God's corrective through Paul in Romans 14 comes in where Paul says, Well, if you choose to have feasts and festivals and specific days of remembrance and a calendar like that, or if you don't, either way, as long as it is unto the Lord, as long as it is a way of re centering and refocusing your life on [00:43:00] the essence of who Christ is, that's the main thing. If that's the motive, as it always is in the Bible, motive is always more important than method. Both matter, but motive is always preeminent.

Jim, as we wrap up here, I wanted to ask a final question of you. We both know people in our lives that have been stricken with Alzheimer's. Even just recently, a mutual friend of ours, I got a report is really struggling, he and his wife and their family with the really tragedy of, of Alzheimer's. Yet, yet at the same time, saw a report recently of some new methods of treatment that are showing some real promise. But it points me, you know, I've had my grandfather as well as my mother struggled with long term experience of, of Alzheimer's and losing memory.

And you get a sense, whenever you're close to one of these stories, of just how precious the gift of memory and remembering are. But as my pastor used to say, a mutual friend of [00:44:00] ours as well we have a great tendency to remember the wrong things and to forget the best things. How can we be better at that?

And, and use things like Remembrance Day, the Shoah of Remembrance Day. How in our Christian practice can we better use the gift of memory and remembering as well as the gift of anticipating? Could you wrap that up for us?

**Dr. Jim Denison:** That's a great question. The first thought that comes to my mind is to remember the things God has done. We've talked about this, but anything God has done, he can still do. He says in Malachi three, I, the Lord do not change. All of God there is, is in this moment. So when I'm facing a challenge, when I'm facing a temptation, an opportunity, a decision, if I can remember what God has done in the past, I can bring that right into the present.

If I'm facing some fear, well, where did God help me with that before? Where did God act in the scriptures in that way? What have I experienced of God in the past, either in scripture or in my own personal life, that I can bring into the place where I need that very [00:45:00] fact in order to

be able to be encouraged today. So I'm remembering what God has done so that I can be encouraged in the present.

Second, I'm remembering what I have done. So that I can be grateful for the places God has shown up in my life and where I can learn from the places where I have sinned against him. Not that I'm wanting to get back into guilt and shame, but I'm wanting to learn from this.

Anything I've ever done, I can still do too. Any sin I've committed, I can still commit. Anything that's happened in the past can happen in the present and in the future. Ernst Trelsch in his historiography method said that the best way to believe something happened in the past is to see if it's still happening in the present.

That made him gave him an enormous bias against miracles because he didn't see people walking on water. So we assume Jesus couldn't have walked on water, for instance. He was wrong about that, of course. He left God's divinity out of that, God's omnipotence out of that. But nonetheless, there's a good point there that if we can understand something happening in the present, well, it probably therefore happened in the past and vice versa.

So, in my own life, what can I learn from my own experiences, good and bad, that can be instructive [00:46:00] for me as I seek to live in the most redemptive and in the most practical way in trying to be obedient to God's work in my life today. And then last, a good man, a dear mentor, and again, one of yours as well, I know, taught me years ago to be faithful to the last word I heard from God and open to the next. Be faithful to the last word you heard from God, but also be open to the next. Paul had never had a Macedonian call before he had a Macedonian call. Saul of Tarsus had never met the risen Christ before he met the risen Christ. So let's not let our experience of God in the past prevent our, our willingness to trust him for something new in the present and in the future.

I love the psalmist continued refrain of singing a new song to the Lord. Let's learn from the past but not be imprisoned by it is the idea. God does show up in new ways sometimes and let's be open to that as well. Faithful to the last word I heard from God and open to the next is I think a balance that helps us to live faithfully in this moment.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** [00:47:00] Yeah, it reminds me of what a good friend of mine says, that we come to church and we come to Bible study to learn about the great stories where God was active in the past, so that we might be open to the next great story that he wants to write. And that he wants, that we get to participate in if we humble ourselves and make ourselves people of faith.

Ryan, you had a

**Dr. Ryan Denison:** I mean, I think one of the things that runs through so much of what y'all are saying is just remembering to include God in that conversation. And I think that's one of the

ways that we can struggle most with regards to remembering the wrong things or forgetting the right things. is that we're the ones that set out to determine what we should remember.

And I think if we're walking closely with the Lord and asking for His help in that way, it just makes it so much easier to avoid those mistakes. And so that would be my encouragement is just, whether it's Holocaust Remembrance Day or any of the other days of remembrance, even just Sunday mornings as a day of remembrance, Make the point to pray and ask God to help you know how you should engage with it, to help you know what it is you're [00:48:00] supposed to remember, and if there's anything else you may want to show you.

Because oftentimes that, that's where the surprise comes in. A lot of times that can be fun. Sometimes they're not so fun, but they're always helpful when God's kind of steps in to show us something that we would never have considered ourselves. And I think that's, that's an important part of the conversation.

**Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, we and we have to remember that we all need God's help in asking him to redeem and renew even this part of our lives that we call our memory and our ability to remember no less a person than I think both Paul and Peter say in their letters, writing the same thing to you, reminding you of things is no burden.

It's actually necessary which could be an encouragement if you hear your Sunday school teacher or your pastor saying something you said before it may just be that you needed to be reminded of it. But we hope that you will observe. International Holocaust Day, which is Saturday, January the 27th along with other important [00:49:00] anchor points and reminders.

Just a short story to close. Just God kind of providentially put this in front of me and my wife. We stumbled on a movie on Netflix recently called Woman in Gold, which tells part of the story of the how the atrocities against the Jews were played out in Austria. And it's a very, very well done movie.

I would encourage you, that might be a way for you to creatively mark Holocaust Remembrance Day is to watch that movie or something like it but find a creative way of remembering those who have been victimized in the past Jews, but not only Jews and how God might use you and use us to do things redemptively in the future so that they are not repeated and that we might honor those.

Who have suffered so grievously and are today even suffering grievously in the conflicts we see around the world. And guys, just want to, again, thank you for being a part of the conversation, really, really some great ideas [00:50:00] for us to consider. I want to thank our listeners for being a part of the Denison Forum podcast.

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