

Israel Commanded Not to Forget the Lord

Deuteronomy 8

Deuteronomy 8 - *“Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. ² And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. ⁵ You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.*

⁶ *“Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. ⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.*

¹¹ *“Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, ¹² lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; ¹³ and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; ¹⁴ when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ¹⁵ who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— ¹⁷ then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’*

¹⁸ *“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. ¹⁹ Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. ²⁰ As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.”*

Background Notes

In Deuteronomy 7, Israel was commanded to eliminate the Canaanites from the Promised Land. Why? Because if Canaanites remained in the Land, there was a great danger of compromise with them, and a danger of adopting their culture and pagan practices.

In Deuteronomy 8 Israel was commanded to remember - and never forget - all the ways that the Lord had led them for forty years through the wilderness. Why? Because there was the danger of becoming self-reliant and proud when they came into the good Land that God was giving them.

And that is exactly what took place. Over the years, Israel forgot how God had led them, provided for them and disciplined them in the wilderness. As a result Israel became proud. They turned from the Lord to idolatry, and had to be removed from the Land. Deuteronomy 8 has a lot of practical application for the believer today. We, too, can forget what God has done for us. We can become self-reliant and proud of "our" accomplishments. God hates the sin of pride. Our Doctrinal Points will cover three areas of wilderness experience that Israel was not to forget.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should remember - and not forget - their beginnings!

Here are excerpts from an essay I wrote on this passage, entitled ***Remembering All The Way***. "Israel was not to forget their deliverance from slavery in the land of Egypt. They were to remember their miraculous beginnings. Without the gracious and sovereign intervention of the Lord, they were a doomed people. Israel was to remember their Exodus after more than 400 years in bondage, the providential leadership of Moses, the plagues that God brought on their slave masters, the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army. The people of Israel were always to remember the God of their beginnings, and give thanks!

Like Israel, growing Christians are not to forget their roots. Let's not forget how God brought us out of spiritual darkness and death into His glorious light and life! Think of the intricate web of circumstances and experiences (even unpleasant ones) that God wove together to bring us to salvation in Christ. Let's remember to thank the Lord specifically for Christian parents, and faithful Sunday school teachers, and Christian friends that He used in our beginnings. Every Christian is commanded to remember with thanksgiving the God of our beginnings."

2. Believers should remember - and not forget - their blessings!

More from the "Devotions from Growing Christians" essay, ***Remembering All The Way***: "We are to remember our blessings. Israel was not only to think of all the blessings that were to come in the Land (v7-9) - they were to remember

the blessings of the past (v3-4). For 40 years the Lord had supernaturally provided for His people. He literally sent them bread from Heaven and water from a rock. For 40 years He kept their clothing and sandals from wearing out! Talk about miracles! The Lord used these blessings to humble and test His people, but they were blessings nonetheless. Israel was to remember all the blessings of the past and give thanks.

Do we remember to thank the Lord for all His past blessings - or are we too busy with the present and the future to remember? Psalm 103:2 says, *“Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”*

Have we ever told the Lord how thankful we are that He has preserved us and protected us from the corruption and crime in this world? And what about our spiritual blessings? Read Ephesians 1:3-14. Have we remembered to thank the Lord for all those amazing spiritual blessings? Believers should not forget their blessings!

3. Believers should remember - and not forget - their “beatings.”

Once again excerpts from ***Remembering All The Way***: “Finally, we are to remember our beatings! The word “beatings” was chosen not only because it began with the letter “b” for the alliterative outline, but also because it conveys the idea of *discipline*. God does not vent His anger against sin on us with a club or a whip, but as our Father, He disciplines us as His children (v5). Our Heavenly Father disciplines us because He loves us and wants the best for us, but sometimes that discipline must come by way of a “beating” or a spanking (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Israel certainly received more than a few slaps on the wrist in the wilderness. Even the way God provided for them was a form of discipline. The way God led Israel in the wilderness was purposely designed to keep them humble, to test them and to expose their true hearts, and to force them to trust Him and depend on Him (v2). He let them get hungry and thirsty. Why? To cause them to look to Him, and to learn that physical food *alone* is not sufficient for life. For them - and for us - there must be there a constant diet of spiritual food – the Word of God (v3).

Although the Lord purposely allowed His people to get hungry and thirsty, He didn’t let them die of starvation or dehydration. He fed them with manna and water from solid rock. Notice – the manna was not the typical home-baked bread, and the water was not from wells that they had dug. No, it was bread from a heavenly origin, and water from a most unlikely source – hard solid rock! Why? This forced them to realize that although God was humbling and testing them, He was caring for them, He was providing for them, and He was thinking of the best for them (v16). **But** - God provided for them in such a way that they could never say, even when they had inherited all the wealth of the Promised Land, that they had pulled off the Exodus and the wilderness march and the Conquest by their own power and strength (v17-18)! Israel was to remember all the ways ***the Lord*** had led them - especially the discipline.

Like the children of Israel, we growing Christians need constant correction and discipline - even a few “spankings” now and then to shape us up and make us look up. The Lord purposely allows us to go through hard “wilderness” times to

humble us and keep us from becoming proud, and to test us – to know what is in our hearts, not just what is in our heads. God can use hard financial times or hard family times or hard failure times to keep us humble, forcing us to look to Him in dependence. The Lord loves us, and He provides all that we need - but not necessarily all that we want! He fed Israel with manna, not steak. He gave them long-lasting clothes, not the latest styles. He took them through the “great and terrible wilderness,” with the snakes and scorpions - not along the Mediterranean beaches.

So the Lord deals with us in discipline. Many times His discipline is hard to handle, and it’s often misunderstood, but He always has our best interests in view. Because of this, we are to remember our “beatings” with thanksgiving! Believers should not forget their beatings.”

(To read the rest of *Remembering All The Way*, go to our website, growingchristians.org.)

Practical Application

Watch out for the “bread alone” mentality!

The Lord Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 when Satan tried to tempt Him to turn stones into bread. *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,”* (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). Even though the Lord was hungry, He knew that His Heavenly Father would provide for Him. In addition, the Father had not directed Him to make bread out of the stones. The Lord did not have a “living by bread alone” mentality. “I always do what the Father wants Me to do” was what mattered to Him.

What about us? Physical needs such as bread are necessary for our well-being - but **“bread alone”** should not be our bottom line! Feeding on the Word of God for spiritual sustenance, for encouragement, guidance, and exhortation – that should be the bottom line in our lives.

Our priority must be to seek first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness. God has promised to provide physical “bread” to meet our physical needs. Our physical needs will be met (Matthew 6:33).

The world and our culture surround us with a “bread alone” mentality. We do not live by bread alone! Let’s not be captured by our culture or capitulate to this world’s priorities.

Watch out for the “bread alone” mentality!