

Diligent Worship in Abundant Blessing

Deuteronomy 6:10-25

Series: *Loving God in Every Way*

Introduction: Please take your Bible and join me in Deuteronomy 6, Deuteronomy chapter 6. Deuteronomy is the 5th book in the Old Testament, so just start at the beginning and leaf over to the 5th book – Deuteronomy chapter 6. Our text this morning follows on the heels of the most important section in the whole book. In verses 4-9 we find the central truth of the book and the central response of God's people to that truth. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Because God is their God and because there is no other God, they are to love God with this all-encompassing love. What we come to next is the central warning to the people of God. The central truth is – The Lord Our God, the Lord is one. The central response is – Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And now, in verse 10 we come to the central warning – which is – do not forget God. Let's read starting in verse 10 and read down through verse 25.

This central warning to not forget the Lord is an often repeated theme in this book of Deuteronomy. In fact, you could argue based on the name of the book that this is the core thrust of the book upon the heart of God's people. The name Deuteronomy means second Law – or second giving of the Law. It is a collection of sermons delivered by Moses to the generation of God's people who were to go over the Jordan and conquer the Promised Land. Before they went they needed to hear of the greatness and glory of their God. They needed to be called to love this God completely. And they needed to be warned about the dangers of spiritual amnesia. In fact, it is such a serious threat that the Spirit of God will spend a whole chapter on it in chapter 8. The focus of our text for this morning is to call the people of God to diligent worship of God in the context of abundant blessing so that they will not forget God. Moses has just told them in verses 7-9 that they are to be so serious about their commitment to love God in every way that they are to put His words at the entrance to their houses and to their cities to declare their allegiance to God. And now, in verse 10 he warns them about those houses and cities and the spiritual dangers which lurk in prosperity. And the first thing we learn is that serious threat lurks in abundant blessing.

I. Serious Threat Lurks in Abundant Blessing – vs. 10-12, 14

- a. The children of Israel are on the verge of God's abundant blessing. They have been wilderness wanderers for 40 years. Living out of tents and eating manna from heaven and drinking water from miraculous sources – like a rock. But now they will enter the Promised Land and God will miraculously defeat their enemies and give this land to them. Notice in verses 10-11 the description of this abundant blessing of the Lord. He will give them this land that has been promised to their forefathers and he will give it to them in such a way that they will enjoy the

benefits of hundreds of years of technological advance and building. They will not have the scorched earth policy of other conquering nations where they destroy everything in sight and then rebuild as they desire. Rather, God will miraculously conquer the land through battles which will leave the cities standing and the bounty of the fields still in place. These are great and good cities and they are filled with all kinds of good things, verse 11 says.

- b. This is a poor analogy in many ways, but it might give you a picture of what this was like. Imagine one of those migrant caravans that we have heard so much about in the last year or so. Let's say it forms in Central America and by the time it reaches the Rio Grande River separating Texas and Mexico it is 1 million people strong. They are poorly equipped for battle, but the river miraculously parts for them and they enter Texas. The U.S. army and all the citizens of Texas go out to battle against them and send them back to where they came from, but again, they miraculously win the battle and completely destroy the people of Texas. And then they enter into the cities and homes of those they have conquered and they simply move in to all their wealth and possessions. They have successfully gone from the filth of living in a tent on a migrant highway to living in a modern suburban home in Austin, Texas! The fridge is full of food they didn't buy and the house is full of all kinds of good things they didn't put there. You get the idea – this is a massive gain for the people of God as they enter into the Promised Land. And before they get there God warns them that there is serious threat to their faith in this abundant blessing.
- c. *To Forget God – vs. 12*
 - i. The serious threat is that they will forget the God who gave them this abundant blessing. In other words, God knows that the provision of all of these things will lure His people to think too little of Him, and eventually to forget Him. They will easily lose their need of Him and therefore lose their dependence upon Him and soon forget Him. Just drawing from these verses we can see that they would be in danger of forgetting what God said – that he was the one who had promised this land to them. And they would be tempted to get an entitlement mentality that somehow this is their land because of some greatness in them. And they would be in danger of forgetting what God had given. That all the blessings they would enjoy day after day and year after year were gifts from His Sovereign Hand and not attainments of their own hard work. And they would also be in danger of forgetting what God did to rescue them from Egyptian slavery and free them to serve Him. If they don't take heed to themselves they will forget God – forget what he said, what he has given and what he has done.
 - ii. And that is the inherent danger of the abundant blessing which God so often bestows upon His children. Please don't mishear that as God tempts us with abundant blessing. God tempts no man to sin against Him. This temptation to forget God is one that plays upon our uniquely human and sinful nature. We are prone to walk by sight and not by faith, and when

God blesses us with the abundance of things we can see and touch and experience to meet our needs, then we are going to face the spiritual danger of forgetting the one who gave us these things. We are constantly tempted to depend upon and trust in and worship the gift instead of the Giver of the gift.

- iii. And that is what is at stake here – a forgetting of God, not just a forgetting of what God has done. It is a subtle shift of emphasis but it is an important one. So, we must not just remember what God has done for us – to rescue us out of spiritual slavery – but we must especially remember God. We know God through His great work in our lives and through the great gifts and blessings he provides, but we ought not worship what God has done, but the God who has done it!

d. *To go after other gods – vs. 14*

- i. The spiritual threat of abundant blessing is to forget God. And the opposite side of that coin is that we will then go after other gods. We are created beings and we will worship. And that is the threat to our hearts when we experience the abundant blessing of God – to leave our worship of God and to go after other gods. In particular, the threat is to go after the other gods connected to the great blessings we are currently enjoying. So we might serve the god of money or the god of possessions or the god of success in the workplace or the god of the perfect family or fill in the blank. We go after these gods by placing our hearts trust in them. We look to them for happiness and joy. We rely upon them to meet our needs. We find our hearts longing for more of them. We value them and seek after them. This is the subtle threat of abundant blessing. Prosperity beckons us to give our heart to love and worship the gift rather than the Giver.
- ii. With this being true then, you would think that most preaching about abundance and prosperity within the context of the Church in America would be about the dangers of these things. But more than anything, you are most likely to hear the offers of wealth and prosperity and blessing if you will just follow God and have faith in Him. Most preaching beckons your heart to want more, not to be on guard about the dangers of what you already have. How different this is from our own Bible. If you think about the teaching of Jesus he was very direct in his warnings about the dangers of wealth and prosperity.
 - 1. Do you remember his parable about the rich farmer who had a bumper crop and built more barns and told himself to eat and drink and be merry? That man's life ended that night and then whose would all the stuff be? Jesus' point in Luke 12 was to warn us that life is not found in the abundance of possessions. But that is the lure of possessions – to tempt you to think that they provide for you what is ultimately only found in God.

2. Then in Luke 15 Jesus tells the parable of the prodigal son. You know that story well. This young man demands his inheritance from his father and this windfall of cash sends the young man into a tailspin of sinful choices. This is not the point of the parable, but it is a legitimate application – that riches tempt us to live recklessly for the fleeting pleasures of sin which ultimately ruin our lives.
3. Then in Luke 18 Jesus interacts with a rich young ruler who thought he had perfectly obeyed the Law and wondered what else he had to do to inherit the Kingdom of God. And Jesus' answer to that man was to go and sell all that he had and to give it to the poor. Not because this is how you are saved, but because this was the god this man was worshiping. And you cannot be saved by God if you are unwilling to let go of your trust and confidence and worship of another god. Riches tempt us to think that the cost of following Jesus is too high, and so Jesus teaches after the rich young man leaves it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven!
4. And then, think of the words that Jesus had for the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3. They lived in one of the most affluent and renowned town of their day. And the satisfaction of abundant wealth and stuff had lured them into trusting in themselves. So Jesus says to them – “you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”

iii. There is great danger and spiritual threat in great prosperity. Therefore, this abundant blessing requires diligent worship.

II. **Abundant Blessing Requires Diligent Worship – vs. 12-19**

- a. That is what the text commands in verses 12-19. In light of the threat of this great abundance they will soon enjoy, they must diligently love God in every way. They must humbly worship Him alone. There are 6 commands given in these 8 verses as the antidote to this great spiritual threat.
- b. *Take Care – 12*
 - i. The first is that they are to take care so that they don't forget God. This Hebrew word for “take care” is used 73 times in the book of Deuteronomy. It is a great word for preachers – which is what Moses is doing here in this book. He is exhorting them to pay attention to listen up and to do something about the truth he is presenting. The point in verse 12 is to call the people of Israel to take great care to watch over their souls so that they do not forget God when they are given abundant blessing. Therefore, you and I must be on guard about this as well. Like a night watchman you must carry the flashlight of the word with you and inspect the state of your soul to be sure that no intruders of self-sufficiency and idolatry and covetousness have entered in. You must take great care!

c. *Fear God – 13a*

- i. Then they are called in verse 13 to these staccato commands – fear, serve, and swear only by God. To fear God is to see God as He is and to be humbled before Him in reverential awe. It is to value Him above all others. It is to desire to please Him and praise Him with your life. It is to orient all areas of life to conformity to His all encompassing commands. It is to love Him with this all-encompassing love of verse 5. If you are fearing God you will not be forgetting God. This is the verse that Jesus quoted to Satan when Satan tempted him to simply bow down to Satan and he would give him the rule over all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus fought the temptation to forget His Father and bow before Satan for an immediate payout with the truth of this verse. God alone deserves to be feared and worshiped and served. Your possessions and your wealth will never stand up to the glory and greatness of God. If you feel your heart being pulled to the altar of your stuff to worship – raise your soul to the heights of Heaven and consider your God. Fearing God is the antidote to worshiping any other god.

d. *Serve God – 13b*

- i. Fearing God and serving God go hand in hand. That is the next commandment – serve God. This is in direct contrast to the slavery they knew in Egypt. They used to be the slaves of another, but now they have been purchased and redeemed by God and He is their Master and Lord. They now serve Him with joy and gladness of heart as a response to His great love for them. And when they get into the land with its great and bountiful blessings they must continue to serve God.
- ii. The truth about the abundance of stuff is that it beckons you to serve it instead of using it to serve God. The more you get the more you have to do to maintain what you have. And that lures you into this endless cycle of maintenance and expense which focuses your attention on the stuff. The solution is not to sell off everything and have no stuff. The solution is, in part, to serve God with the stuff. God is giving them this abundant blessing of cities they didn't build and houses they didn't construct, and vineyards they didn't plant, and cisterns they didn't dig. And he tells them to take care to not forget him by using those things to serve Him. If you are all in on serving God in every area of your life – if nothing is off limits – if there is nothing that you actually own, but just stuff that has been given to you by God to steward, then you will not forget God and serve the stuff. Rather you will serve God with the stuff.

e. *Swear by God only – 13c*

- i. The next staccato command is to swear by God's name only. The idea is to give a sacred and unbreakable commitment to someone, and to amplify the seriousness of the commitment by invoking the name of someone greater and more worthy of trust than you. This is not something we do

very often – usually only in a court room setting where we are sworn in to tell the truth. God is saying to them that they are only to do this in His name, and not in the name of some other god. In other words, they are not to value and esteem the name and supposed worth of another god by using his name in some covenant agreement.

- ii. The idea here is that there is not to be a name that is considered more trustworthy or more honorable than their Lord's name. And they are to never forget that or let that slip by swearing in the name of another.

f. *Don't Test God – 14-16*

- i. Then in verses 14-16 this diligent worship of the Lord is defined as not testing the Lord. This testing of the Lord is what will happen if they go after other gods once they get in the Promised Land. And if they did this they would be testing the jealousy of God by which he would be rightly angry with them. This idea of the jealousy of God is something we have talked about already from chapters 4 and 5, but this adjective is used only of God and it is always used in the context of His people worshiping and serving other gods. He will not just sit around while they go on their merry old way to the altar of another god. He will be kindled in his jealousy toward them and eventually he will bring that anger upon them to judge them for their sin.
- ii. So, they are being told in advance that they are to guard their hearts when they come into this land of abundant blessing so that they don't put God to the test. Eugene Merrill says that "To test God is to make upon him demands or requirements that are inappropriate either to his nature and character or to the circumstances." And that is what we see in the example given in verse 16 – the situation at Massah. That is the time when the children of Israel were lacking water on their journey through the wilderness in Exodus 17. And they bemoaned their lack of water and they started to complain against Moses and against God and they even questioned whether or not God was truly in their midst or not. Their thinking must have gone something like, "we need water and if God were among us then he would give us water, but he's not giving us water so he must not be with us." And so they demanded that God give them water. And indeed he did give them water out of the rock after Moses struck it. The psalmist tells us that God was testing his people in this incident, and Moses tells us that they were testing God, and indeed both are true. But they should not have been testing God, but rather trusting God. They placed themselves over God and demanded that He do for them as they thought He should. Their plight and their great need tempted them to doubt the goodness of God and to demand the intervention of God.
- iii. But now in Deuteronomy 6 they are being warned about when the roles are reversed. When they have great blessing instead of great need there is still the danger of putting God to the test. Both need and abundance tempt us to walk by sight and not by faith and to forget God or demand of

God that he do for us as we think he should. Don't test God in your abundance by forgetting Him and going after other gods. And this jealousy of God for His people is a powerful deterrent to mindless forgetfulness of God. If you are sensitive to not test the Lord you will be more likely to diligently worship Him.

- g. *Diligently Obey – 17-19*
 - i. And this will carry itself out in diligent obedience like what is described in verses 17-19. If you don't want to test the Lord then you must diligently keep the commandments and testimonies and statutes of the Lord. This diligent keeping is the same word Hebrew word repeated twice for emphasis. It's the word for "take care" in verse 12. So, verse 17 starts with "You shall take care to take care of the commandments." In other words, you must diligently obey all that God has spoken and in this way you will not forget the Lord in the midst of abundant blessing.
 - ii. This is a powerful prescription to keep us from falling away from trust in the Lord in the midst of abundant blessing, isn't it? If, with all the abundance of stuff and wealth you are always asking, "how am I to use this in accordance with God's will for God's glory?" then you will not be prone to bite the lure to forget God which prosperity offers.
 - iii. This is what diligent worship of God looks like in the midst of abundant blessing – it looks like keeping a close watch, and fearing God, and serving God, and swearing to God only, and not testing God, and diligently obeying God. Some of you may have been lulled to spiritual sleep by the abundance of your stuff. Maybe you have forgotten the hard and difficult path of the Christian which requires self-denying obedience to the Lord and unending trust in His sovereign care. Rather you have named the name of the Lord and called yourself a Christian, but the fact that you don't really need God for any daily need has led you to forget God and be lazy about following Christ. As Christ said to the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3 so I say to you – "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent."
- III. **Diligent Worship Allows for God-Exalting Explanation – vs. 20-25**
 - a. If we are living out this diligent worship of the Lord then we will be asked by those closest to us why the Word of God and the will of God are so important to us. That is what Moses anticipates in verses 20-25. If they realize the serious threat of abundant blessing and they live out these 6 expressions of diligent worship, then they will face the question from their kids about these commandments of the Lord. Before we examine the answer Moses gives, I wonder what your answer might be? Let's say that you're talking to your teenage daughter about some decision you have made which affects her. She has recently started listening to some music which has concerned you and so you decided to talk with her about it. As you apply Biblical principles to the music and show her how the lyrics and the music videos are contrary to the truth you can sense that she is growing more and more frustrated. Finally, in exasperation and self-defense

she says to you – “Why does everything have to come back to what the Bible says with you?” What would you say?

- b. Maybe you would say, “well, honey, that’s what Christians do – they care about the Bible?” Or, “because, that’s what God told us to do – to obey Him in every way.” Or, “because we know that God’s Word is truth and we know that truth sets us free and so we want to be governed by this life-giving truth.” All of those are technically right answers. But are they the best answer? Notice three elements of the answer Moses tells them to give their children. And these three elements point to the exaltation of God. If your diligent worship is truly moved along in your heart by a high and holy esteem and reverence for the God who saved you out of spiritual bondage, then your answer to this question allows for a God-exalting explanation.
- c. *Awed by Sovereign Grace – 20-23*
 - i. Notice that the answer is awed by sovereign grace. That is where Moses starts in this sample answer. He starts with the slavery they knew in Egypt and how the Lord brought them out with a mighty hand and has brought them to this Promised Land as a gift of His sovereign grace. As we will see next week from chapter 7, this work of God was completely based upon God’s love for them. There was nothing good in them which beckoned God to set His love on them and display His power for them to free them from their bondage. It was merely an act of the free and unstoppable and unearned goodness and lovingkindness of God.
 - ii. This is the engine room which drives this ship of diligent worship of God. It is the sovereign grace of God which has rescued us from our bondage to sin and has made us his child and has called us to the great bounty of His heavenly home. All of this was done by the might and power and signs and wonders both great and grievous – all through the work of Jesus Christ. The Son of God himself came and laid down His life as the payment price so that we might be redeemed from sin and set free to eternal life. Do you know this redemption? Have you been set free from your spiritual bondage by the blood of Christ?
 - iii. If the answer is no, then the solution is to look to Jesus Christ today and live. Delay no longer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.
 - iv. If the answer is yes, then the question for you from this text is, are you awed by that sovereign grace which has rescued you? Are you humbled before God because He has reached into your life and brought you up from the miry pit of guilt and condemnation? Are you daily compelled by this great and sovereign grace of God to love God in every way because of all He has given and all He has done to save you? And when you are asked about why God and His Word is so important to you, assuming that this is true, then is this at the heart of your answer? I love God and I seek to serve and obey Him because I was lost in darkness and sin, but God rescued me through the light of Jesus Christ.

- d. *Controlled by God's Goodness – 24*
 - i. Then notice that when he does talk about the commands in verse 24 he talks about them as being for our good always. In other words, his thoughts about the Word of God and the commands of God are controlled by God's goodness. They are commanded to obey and to fear not just because it is right but because it is best for them. God has promised to give them abundant life if they will walk in all his ways and fear Him all their days.
 - ii. Is that how you think about God's commands? When you read in your New Testament all the ways in which God calls you to walk worthy of your calling in Christ, do you think in terms of stifling your freedom and killing your joy? Or do you think of them as giving life and blessing you with the abundant goodness of God? What would your closest friends and family say about you if I asked them that question?
- e. *Compelled by Pleasing God – 25*
 - i. And then, lastly, notice that this sample answer Moses gives explains their obedience as compelled by pleasing God in verse 25. They are gripped by this sovereign grace and they are convinced that God's commands are for their good always. And the culmination of that thought is that they long to be righteous before God and therefore to be pleasing to Him. This righteousness is the working out of that sovereign grace which has made them His people. This is the sanctifying grace of God at work in His people to help them walk in a manner worthy of the calling He has placed upon them.
 - ii. So, you have taken note of the progression of Moses' answer right? He didn't start with our obedience so as to earn our righteousness and then to secure God's rescuing work and set us free. That is the "gospel" of every other religious system. Works plus grace equals salvation. But the Bible is consistent throughout – salvation from sin is all of grace and we are rescued and liberated and privileged to obey God. Is that understanding of God's grace so ingratiated into your heart that it forms your answer when you are asked the meaning of your diligent worship of God?

Conclusion: Beloved, there is a serious threat in the abundant blessing of physical provision that we all enjoy. That serious threat must be fought off through diligent worship. And this diligent worship must be driven by this great and good God who has saved and rescued us. Truly our salvation and our obedience is from him and through him and to him – to God be the glory both now and forever! Let's pray.