

Not by Bread Alone
Deuteronomy 8
Series: Loving God in Every Way

Introduction: Take your Bibles and join me in Deuteronomy 8. We continue our trek this morning through the wonderful book of Deuteronomy. I have often described this book to you as a mountain peak and we have hiked to the top of the summit and are now descending on the other side. In the first 4 chapters we climbed up the ascent as we covered historical data preparing us for the beauty of the peak. In chapter 5 we came to the lush mountain meadow near the peak in which we stopped and examined the unique beauty of each of the ten commandments give on Mount Sinai. And then we made the final ascent in chapter 6 as we came to the core truth of the whole book in verse 4 – Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One. And this was quickly followed by the core response of God’s people to this core truth – that they were to love the Lord their God with all their heart all their soul and all their might. This unchanging and unalterable truth about the Lord our God calls for one basic response from His people – that we love God in every way with everything we have. The rest of the book of Deuteronomy will descend from here in the sense that everything flows out of this truth and this response of love to this one true God.

Immediately after that key section in chapter 6 we are given the central warning in the book of Deuteronomy and that is to not forget the Lord. In chapter 6 the concern was that they would forget the Lord in the midst of His abundant blessing. And in chapter 7 the concern was that they would forget the Lord in the face of an overwhelming enemy. And now in chapter 8 the concern is that they not forget the Lord in the luxury of abundant provision. Chapter 8 says this ...

As Moses preaches to God’s people to prepare them for their entrance into the Promised Land he warns them about the multiplied provision of the Lord that awaits them there. This is obviously part of the deal that makes the Promised Land so appealing, but it also makes it dangerous. In the wilderness the people were tested and humbled by the Lord and the danger there was that they would forget the Lord in the midst of meager provision and great need. Now Moses warns them that there will be danger when they get to the land of Promise as well. The abundant provision will create a luxury of lifestyle which will make dependence upon the Lord something that is negotiable rather than necessary. Unlike the wilderness where they couldn’t survive without casting themselves in full dependence upon the Lord, in the Promised Land they will be able to survive for a time without this conscious dependence upon God. And if they give up this humble dependence upon God they will be in danger of pride which will lead them to forgetting God which will send them down the path of following after other gods in idolatry. So, Moses is calling them to this ongoing spirit of humble dependence upon the Lord which will kill the smug self-sufficiency which so easily rises in the human heart. And that humble dependence

does four things in this chapter – it receives God’s discipline, and it rejoices in God’s provision and it remembers God’s providence and it remembers God’s covenant promises.

So, this is instructive for us as well, as all Scripture is. This text exposes the sinful tendency of our own hearts doesn’t it? We too, as God’s people are prone to walk in smug self-sufficiency while we enjoy the luxury of God’s abundant provision. We are tempted to be like Nebuchadnezzar and look at all that we have in life and think to ourselves – look at this beautiful life I have made for myself. We are tempted to be like the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3 and assume that we have no need of anything because we are so well supplied. Or we are tempted to be like Martha instead of Mary – so busy with the maintenance of the stuff of life that we neglect what is most needful. So, let’s learn together how to develop this heart attitude of humble dependence upon the Lord which kills this self-sufficiency.

I. Receives God’s Discipline – vs. 1-6

- a. To do that we must understand that this humble dependence receives God’s discipline. Moses begins this chapter by calling them to be careful to obey the whole commandment that they might go in and multiply in the Land. And then immediately in verse 2 he begins rehearsing for them their wilderness experience which he concludes in verse 5 by saying that they must understand that God disciplines his people just like a father disciplines his son. And the result of that discipline in verse 6 is that God’s people should keep God’s commandments as they walk in fear of Him. So, if they are going to be a people who are humbly dependent upon the Lord they will be a people who receive this discipline from the Lord.
- b. Think with me about this discipline from the Lord that led them through the wilderness. Remember where this falls in God’s providential plan. They have just been miraculously freed from the greatest world power of their day – the nation of Egypt. And they are about to enter into the land of God’s promise going back many generations. They are finally going to be the generation that gets to go in and inhabit this Promised Land. And, on top of that, when they get there they are going to be abundantly blessed by God and multiplied in every way. And so, on the timeline of events – between leaving the land of their slavery through miraculous means and entering the Land of Promise which holds multiplied blessings for them – they are led through the wilderness for 40 years as they are humbled and tested by God. Lest they get puffed up by the great display of God’s power in Egypt and God’s great provision in the Promised Land, they are led through their wilderness to humble and test them.
- c. Verse 3 in particular reminds them that in the wilderness they were tested through physical hunger and the provision of bread from Heaven. This unusual and never to be repeated provision of the Lord of sending this flaky, coriander seed like substance with the dew in the morning for some 38 years was meant to humble and test them. In particular this wilderness experience of hunger and of God’s unusual provision was to teach them that they as God’s people do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

- d. In other words, they were put in a spot by the Providential leading of God where they did not know how they were going to meet their physical needs because they couldn't do anything to meet them. So, they cried out to the Lord, mostly in complaint, and God provided for them by the command of His Word and told them how they were to collect this miraculous bread from Heaven. The Lord, in his infinite wisdom, humbled them by putting them in a place where they had no possible way of meeting their own need. They had to depend completely upon Him and the command of His Word.
 - e. And, if you remember how this played out from Exodus 16 you remember that it wasn't pretty. The test revealed the pride and unbelief of their hearts. They said terrible things about God like, we should have never left Egypt. God should have just left us there to die in our slavery because at least there we had meat to eat. And this is so often what the wilderness experience does for the people of God. It exposes the sinfulness and pride of the heart which can only be known by this testing of God's discipline. We think we are doing fine and listening to and following God's Word, and then He sinks us deep into a pit of trial and testing and we are completely broken before the Lord as we claw at the walls of our providential prison looking for any way possible to get out. And this is part of the design by our all-wise Heavenly Father. The wilderness first breaks us of our resident self-sufficiency and then re-makes us to live according to every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And this magnifies God as he patiently supplies our every need and matures us in faith in the process.
 - f. So, why does Moses rehearse this with them? They are past that now aren't they? Well, they are past that particular wilderness experience, but Moses is saying to them that they are never past the Fatherly discipline of God. He loves them too much and is too concerned for His own glory in the world to not discipline them. And so, they must be a people who willingly receive that discipline when it comes. When God breaks them with another wilderness experience, they must submit to His fatherly care, knowing that in the end it is God's ultimate design to do us good in the end, as Moses says in verse 16. And one of the ways to know if we are receiving this discipline from the Lord is to examine whether or not verse 6 is more true on the other side of the discipline. Do I fear Him more? Am I all the more committed to walking in His ways because through this discipline I have been humbled and tested and now desire to obey more than ever? This will kill our smug self-sufficiency.
2. **Rejoices in God's Provision – vs. 7-14, 17-18**
- a. The next mark of this humble dependence is that it rejoices in God's provision. That's the instruction that fills the heart of the chapter from verses 7-14. After reminding them of the meager rations of the wilderness in which they had to rely on miracle bread from heaven and water from the rock, Moses launches in to tell them of the bounty they will have in the Promised Land. Instead of having to look for miracle water the water will abundantly flow. Instead of having to look for miracle bread they will have bread without scarcity. The natural resources will abound and in verse 10 he tells them that they will eat and be full. And then in

verses 12-13 the promise of verse 1 is fulfilled – they will live in the land and multiply. Their flocks and herds will multiply, their silver will multiply, their gold will multiply, and everything they have will multiply.

- b. And at first, in verse 10, they will bless the Lord for the good land that he has given to them. Like kids who open their Christmas presents – they at first are jumping up and down with excitement and saying, “thank you, thank you, thank you” to their parents. But after a few days of playing with their abundant luxury, they have taken the toy for granted and their parents generosity. So too with the Israelites. They will at first give thanks to the Lord. That is synonymous with blessing the Lord. It is to rejoice in Him because of all that He has given.
- c. But there is a prominent threat in this prolific blessing. And that threat is that their hearts will be puffed up and they will forget the Lord. That is the warning of verse 11. They are to take care, or to carefully guard their heart, so that they don’t forget God in the midst of this great provision. This forgetting of God is built upon the platform of a lifted up heart in verse 14. And this is explained further in verses 17-18 – “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your god, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”
- d. So, don’t miss the progression here. God is going to abundantly bless them and this abundant blessing is going to tempt them to have arrogant hearts which are self-sufficient which then forget God and walk away from His commandments. This is the great threat of abundant provision. The luxury of it all lures us into self-sufficiency which says like Nebuchadnezzar, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” Beloved, there are few greater slights to the High King of Heaven than to be that smug in self-sufficiency. You remember what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4 tells us that while the words were still coming out of the king’s mouth a voice from heaven spoke and told him of his coming humiliation. God is easily provoked to righteous anger by the pride of our hearts. James 4 tells us that he opposes the proud – he stands on the opposite hill in battle formation. To think in your heart that you have created the little kingdom of possessions that happens to be yours and to claim the abundance of provision which has come to you simply by the kindness of the God of Heaven as though it is all something which you have created is a terrible affront to the character and nature of God.
- e. And the great antidote here is to rejoice in what God has given. To be ever mindful so as to be thankful. This is why we pray before the most menial of things like eating a bowl of cereal in the morning. It is to remind ourselves and to express to our God that not even the smallest of things has come from our own hand. It is all given to us by our great God. And a mark of this heart which rejoices in the Lord will be a heart which is dependent upon God’s Word. The heart which recognizes God’s constant and abundant provision of all things will be the heart which lives out verse 3 – that man does not live by bread alone, but

by every word which comes out of the mouth of God. If you are truly rejoicing in God's provision then you will be humbly seeking to walk in accordance with God's Word.

- f. So, if we are going to have a humble dependence which kills smug self-sufficiency then we must always rejoice in God's provision.
- 3. Remembers God's Providence – vs. 11-16**
- a. This humble dependence also remembers God's providence. That is found in verses 11-16. Moses rehearses for them the mighty works of God to free them from Egypt and to lead them to the Promised Land. In verses 14-16 he details 5 specific things God providentially did in their past which they must not forget. He brought them out of the land of Egypt. He brought them out of the house of slavery. He led them through a great and terrifying wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and its thirsty ground where there was no water. And he brought them water out of a flinty rock. And he fed them with manna that their fathers did not know. Every one of those acts are supernatural displays of the power of God. Only God could take a million plus people and do all those things with them. Like Moses said in chapter 4 – has any god every tried to do this before – to take a nation out from under another nations control by performing great and miraculous signs? They must never forget this providential work of God's power and love on their behalf.
 - b. And this remembering of God's providential work to put them where they are will produce in them a humble reliance upon God's Word. So, there is a cycle here. They are to be humbled by the memory of God's prior work on their behalf which will produce greater humility in them to want to walk in all their ways according to the commands of God. It is the daily experience of the Christian to rehearse the great providential acts of God – particularly those which led to their own redemption – as a means to humble their hearts and compel their obedience.
 - c. I had the privilege yesterday of leading our NBC 101 class in which I get to talk for a really long time about the nature of the church and the history of the church and the current practices and priorities of the church and the future of the church. It is one of my most favorite things to do as a pastor! I was already excited about the class, but yesterday morning I was reviewing my notes and I have a section in there in which I tell my own story of coming to faith in Christ and of how the Lord worked in my life to burden me for pastoral ministry and to give me opportunity to serve Him in that role. And as I thought back over my life to this point, a wave of deep gratitude to the Lord rushed over my soul. Like an unsuspecting child at the beach, this wave crashed into me and humbled me before the Lord. I was struck with thoughts like – I have no business at all being a pastor in a church. I have no business at all being a Christian who has been shown the great grace of God. I have no business at all claiming the name and work of Christ. I have done nothing to earn any of it, it is all because of the kind grace of God. Well, guess what that moment of remembering did for the rest of my day? It launched me joyfully into service. I had a new bounce in my spiritual step and a deeper desire to use this ransomed life for the glory of my gracious

King. That is the idea here in our text. If they will but remember the grand work of God to make them His people and to free them from the bondage of Egypt, they will not presume upon their own strength. They will not grow in self-sufficient arrogance. They will not walk away from keeping the commands of the Lord. Rather, they will humbly and joyfully and thankfully follow the Lord in response to his providential work for them.

4. Remembers God's Covenant Promises – vs. 1, 6, 11, 19-20

- a. And then, the fourth mark of this humble dependence which kills self-sufficiency is that it remembers God's covenant promises. That is what they are called to in verses 19-20. They must not forget God and go after other gods to serve them. If they do God will keep his covenant promises of judgment upon them. We will get to those promises of judgment later in the book, but this Mosaic covenant agreement that they entered into with the Lord has the stipulation of God's law upon them. If they follow and fear and obey then they will be blessed in the land. If they fail and falter and walk after other gods then they will be judged in the land just like the nations they are going in to dispossess.
- b. And that is why the repeated theme of this chapter has been for them to keep the whole commandment of God to them. That is how he started in verse 1. And then again in verse 6 he says – “so you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.” In verse 11 he tells them not to forget the Lord by not keeping his commandments and rules and statutes. And then the promise in verses 19-20 is that if they do forget and follow after other gods, they will be rightly judged by their covenant making and covenant keeping God. So, they must maintain this humble dependence upon God which always remembers God's covenant promises and therefore walks according to His ways.
- c. And this is true for the Christian today as well. But we operate under the agreements of a different covenant. We are no longer under the confines of the Mosaic Covenant, but are under the grace of the New Covenant of Christ. So, let's think about this Christ for a moment.
- d. The children of Israel were tested and humbled and disciplined in the wilderness. They failed the test of faith but God still, in his mercy provided water and bread for them as he taught them that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word which comes out of the mouth of God. Where Israel failed, there was a perfect Son of Abraham who was also tested in the wilderness who did not fail. In Matthew 4 and in Luke 4 we are told about how Jesus, after his baptism, was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness for 40 days. At the end of the 40 days without bread and water Jesus was tempted by Satan to turn the brown stones of the desert into loafs of bread. Jesus obviously had the power to do this, but his response is to quote the last part of verse 3 in Deuteronomy 8 to his tempter – man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which comes out of the mouth of God. In other words, he was saying to Satan what he later said to his own disciples in John 4 that His food was to do the will of the Father who had sent him into the world. Where Israel failed over and over again to walk by faith

in the Word of the Lord – both in need and in plenty – Jesus walks perfectly and obediently to the Father.

- e. But that is not the only parallel to Christ Jesus in our text. As the perfect Son who did not give in to temptation, He has earned the right to be the Bread of Life which He talked about in John 6. Turn there with me – John 6.
- f. Jesus had fed the 5,000 and walked on water, and on the next day, the crowd hunts him down and asks him how he got across the lake without a boat. Jesus' answer, like usual, cuts to the heart of the issue for them. Let's start reading in verse 26. *Read John 6:26-51.*

Conclusion: Have you received this bread of Life? If not, believe in Christ today and you will never hunger or thirst again. If you have this bread of life, then beloved, you have everything you will ever need. You can learn to be content in plenty or in need because you have Christ. And you can receive God's discipline and rejoice in God's provision and remember God's providence and remember God's covenant blessings to you in Christ as you walk each day in thankful obedience to our Lord. Let's pray.