



Deuteronomy - Chapter Eight

II Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32 - Moses' Second Speech: General Covenant Stipulations (continues)

Summary of Chapter Eight

The people are reminded that they were tested and chastised by God for the past forty years so that they would learn to trust him because, at the same time, he had met all their needs. They are called to remember this as they move into the rich and prosperous land the Lord is giving to them.

They are also warned that, when they become comfortable in the land, they are not to think they have succeeded by their own abilities but they are to remember it was God that gave it all to them. They are not to worship other gods or else the Lord will see them perish in the same way as the nations that will perish before them.

II.g Deuteronomy 8:1-20 - A Warning Not to Forget God in Prosperity

This chapter makes clear that the wilderness period was not only a punishment but also a test. While contrasting the deprivation of the wilderness with the abundance of the land, this chapter implies that the land itself is also a test. If the wilderness lesson is learned, it can be applied in the new situation of the land.

¹ This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.

Deuteronomy 8:1

This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe. God called Israel to complete obedience. This obedience was to be based on remembering what the Lord had done among them in the wilderness.

Go in and occupy the land. God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their ancestors would inherit the land and would prosper in it. Now it was time for the promise to come to fruition: <<*If they listen, and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness*>> (Job 36:11).

² Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. ³ He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

Remember is a key word in this chapter, along with its antonym 'forget'. Remembrance is demonstrated in obedience: <<*Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day*>> (Deuteronomy 5:15).

In order to humble you. God humbled Israel. He brought them to a place where all they could do was depend on him. They had nothing else, and no one else to count on. Some think that God's work of humbling is accomplished just by bringing people into a humble place. But it is where their heart is while they are in the humble place that God is really concerned about. Christians may be in a humble place, but longing for something different. They may believe that God owes something different to them, and that they will soon get it. Instead, God wants them to be content in the humble place he puts them.

Testing you to know what was in your heart. The wilderness test was to reveal the state of Israel's heart. This does not imply that God did not know but rather that he desired for Israel's heart to produce evidence of obedience. Also, failing such tests does at least give the person the opportunity to realise they are not being obedient to God's call on their life.

He humbled you by letting you hunger. All of God's education begins here. Some never even make it past this first essential step. If they are not humble and not teachable, there is then no point to the rest of any of God's education.

Then by feeding you with manna. The next grade of God's education is total dependence on the Lord. Israel had to rely on God beyond their own knowledge,

hence the statement with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, and also beyond their own ability.

Manna literally means ‘What is it?’ This was the initial reaction of the people when God first gave it to them: <<*When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat’*>> (Exodus 16:15); it was not to their liking: <<*but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at*>> (Numbers 11:6), and: <<*The people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food’*>> (Numbers 21:5). The testing was also to teach Israel that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Real life derives directly from God and trusting his word (‘word’ could also be translated thing spoken of). This was the learning that Israel needed in its heart (v.2) if it was to pass the test in the land (v.17). This is the third of three verses from Deuteronomy quoted by Jesus in his temptation, refer also to Deuteronomy 6:13 and 6:16, affirming his confidence and determined faithfulness toward God.

This statement is a command; but it is also a simple statement of fact: one shall not live by bread alone. A person may exist by material things alone, but they will not live. Anyone thinking they live for bread alone is actually one of the living dead. It is the Word of God that is the true food and substance, and not dreams or imaginations: <<*I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die*>> (John 6:48-50). If a person is more excited about some dream or vision than they are about God’s Word, then something is wrong: <<*Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the Lord*>> (Jeremiah 23:28). In terms of the sequence of the three quotes this was the first on each occasion in Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4.

⁴ The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years.

Deuteronomy 8:4

The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. The people had lived in the wilderness for forty years with little access to materials other than from their herds and flocks. In addition, they had walked hundreds of miles without their shoes ever wearing out. This was truly a miracle. This is later confirmed by God’s own words: <<*I have led you for forty years in the wilderness. The clothes on your back have not worn out, and the sandals on your feet have not worn out*>> (Deuteronomy 29:5); it would again be

acknowledged after the Babylonian Exile had ended: <<*For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell*>> (Nehemiah 9:21).

⁵ Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you.

Deuteronomy 8:5

Again the emphasis is on Israel's heart. The wilderness test was punishment for the generation that perished, but a loving act of discipline for the current generation.

So the Lord your God disciplines you. God is the Father of everyone and therefore he has both the right and the duty to discipline his children when they disobey him. However, he does it through love to ensure they are guided more than punished: <<*My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves the one he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights*>> (Proverbs 3:11-12), <<*And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children – 'My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.'* Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it>> (Hebrews 12:5-11).

⁶ Therefore keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

Deuteronomy 8:6

Therefore keep the commandments of the Lord your God. If Israel would put their focus on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord, then the Lord would take care of all the material things, and bring them into a materially abundant land. God is not against material things, except when they come between his people and him. God wanted to materially bless a spiritually obedient Israel: <<*If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my*

commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life>> (1 Kings 3:14).

⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.

Deuteronomy 8:7-9

For. The purpose of passing the test of v.3 is because Israel is entering an especially abundant land (vv.7-10). Although it is the antithesis of the good land, the wilderness is the testing ground for life in the land: <<*I thought how I would set you among my children, and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of all the nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me>>* (Jeremiah 3:19), and: <<*On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands>>* (Ezekiel 20:6).

¹⁰ You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

Deuteronomy 8:10

The culmination of this hymn-like praise of the land is complete satisfaction. For that, Israel is to bless the Lord, i.e. praise him: <<*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name>>* (Psalm 103:1).

¹¹ Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today.

Deuteronomy 8:11

Satisfaction carries a warning: Take care, the command that vv.7-10 has been working toward: <<*But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children>>* (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Do not forget the Lord your God. When everything this fine with God's people and their lives are filled with abundance, it is not hard to have their hearts lifted up.

They can easily forget the Lord himself and forget it was all his work on their behalf.

For a parallel of vv.7-11, refer to Deuteronomy 6:10-12.

¹² When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, ¹⁶ and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good.

Deuteronomy 8:12-16

Then do not exalt yourself. The danger is pride. In the land of plenty, pride comes from forgetting the wilderness (vv.14-16), and failing to apply its lessons in the good land, a land in which the Lord will clearly bless them.

He made water flow for you from flint rock. Massah is where Israel tested God: <<*Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah*>> (Deuteronomy 6:16). In reality, Israel was being tested by God.

¹⁷ Do not say to yourself, ‘My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.’

Deuteronomy 8:17

Do not say to yourself. This verse puts into words the pride alluded to in v.14 and is the climax of vv.12-17.

My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth. This is rarely said with the lips; it is said instead in the heart. It is easier to say ‘God did it’ or ‘It’s all the blessing of the Lord’ than it is to really mean these words in the heart: <<*The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks*>> (Luke 6:45).

¹⁸ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.

Deuteronomy 8:18

Instead of forgetfulness, Israel is to remember the Lord your God. In times of abundance, it is easy to forget the Lord, or to at least no longer seek him with the urgency one once had.

For it is he who gives you power to get wealth. This is an explicit corrective to the proud words in v.17. Israel's future wealth will be evidence of God's faithfulness to keep the covenant. People often think highly of their own hard work and brilliance. Yet they must see that God gives them the body, the brain, and the talent. It is all of God: <<*The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts*>> (1 Samuel 2:7), <<*They will abide in prosperity, and their children shall possess the land*>> (Psalm 25:13), and: <<*The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it*>> (Proverbs 10:22). King Solomon took a different opinion due to the circumstances of his life, circumstances of his own making: <<*Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to the skilful; but time and chance happen to them all*>> (Ecclesiastes 9:11). In other words: forget about God and take a chance. Not his wisest words!

So that he may confirm his covenant. This is a reminder of just why God has blessed his people, then and now. His plan is that it would ultimately further his eternal purpose. Therefore people have no right to use their material blessing to further selfish purposes; instead, they use their resources to advance his kingdom.

As he is doing today. Expressions like this occur regularly in Deuteronomy to give Israel confidence in God's power and faithfulness.

¹⁹ If you do forget the Lord your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

²⁰ Like the nations that the Lord is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 8:19-20

I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Moses loved Israel, but he loved God more. Without hesitation, he would take the witness stand against a disobedient, proud Israel, and warn them before God that they will surely perish because of their pride and disobedience: <<*I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess*>> (Deuteronomy 30:18).

The path of forgetfulness leads not only to pride but also to idolatry. When Israel commits idolatry, it acts like a pagan nation and so its destiny at God's hands will be like that of the nations. Israel would be tempted to look at the nations being

judged in front of them, and to think, “We’re better than them, so we are safe. God would never deal with us that way.” But God would deal with them that way if they rose up in pride against him: <<*This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they scoffed and boasted against the people of the Lord of hosts*>> (Zephaniah 2:10), and: <<*for all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches – comes not from the Father but from the world*>> (1 John 2:16).

Pride is the greatest danger in the Christian life. It is the most satanic of sins, because it was by pride that Satan himself fell. Satan prizes a proud believer over the most notorious sinner, because he looks at the proud believer and says, “Now there’s a man just like me!”