

The Danger of Prosperity

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[0 : 00] All right, if you have your Bibles with you this morning, we are once again going to be in the Old Testament.

I know we were in the New Testament for quite some time as we went through Romans. But again, all of God's Word, from cover to cover, from Genesis through Revelation, all of it is full of things that are written for us.

It's God's message for us, not just as a history lesson, but because all of it has something that we can learn from, something that God desires to teach us. And this morning we're back in Deuteronomy.

Chapter 8 is where we're going to begin. We're going to look at a couple of scriptures in Deuteronomy and elsewhere, but we're going to begin in Deuteronomy 8. So I encourage you to find that.

And once you have, if you're able, I'm going to ask you to stand as we read God's Word together. And we're going to read all of Deuteronomy 8. It's like 20 verses long, but we need to kind of get a feel for what God is telling us in these verses.

[1 : 07] Again, Deuteronomy 8, beginning in the first verse, and this is God's Word for us today.

Verse 1. Neither did your fathers know that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.

Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your foot swell these forty years. You shall also consider in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.

Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and out of the hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness.

You shall not lack anything in it, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig brass. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

[2 : 52] Beware that you forget not the Lord your God in not keeping His commandments and His judgments and His statutes which I command you this day. Lest when you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and dwelled therein, and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage.

Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought where there was no water. Who brought you forth water out of the rock of Flint.

Who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers knew not that He might humble you and He might prove you to do good at your latter end. And you say in your heart, My power and the might of My hand has gotten me this well.

But you shall remember the Lord your God for it is He that gives you power to get wealth and He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers as it is this day.

And it shall be if you do at all forget the Lord your God and walk after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

[4 : 10] As the nations which the Lord destroys before your face, so shall you perish because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You for this day that You've given us. We thank You that we could get out this morning and be here in Your house. We thank You that You've given us the means and the health to be able to do that.

And Lord, as we sang, I surrender all earlier, I pray that we would surrender this time right now to You, that we would surrender our attention to You, that we would surrender our hearts and our minds fully to You, to focus on Your Word, the message that You have for us, to take it in, to surrender our will and allow Your will to take over, to allow Your will to guide and direct our lives and our decisions.

Help us to surrender all these things to You this morning, Lord. Lord, teach us from Your Word. Let Your Spirit move in our hearts. And we ask and pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ and all God's people said, Amen.

All right, you can be seated this morning. So this was a long chapter, wasn't it? 20 verses. It's a lot to stand up and read. You're probably thinking, oh, I'm tired. I want to sit down. It's a long chapter. But there is so much in this chapter that I think we need to take note of.

[5 : 26] So much that God was telling the Israelites that again, it says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The things that He wanted to see in His chosen people of Israel, guess what?

He wants to see the same things in you and I today. So let's look at some of the things that God had to say to His people, to the Israelites. I want you to look in verse 2 that we read of chapter 8.

And you shall remember all the ways which the Lord your God led you these 40 years in the wilderness. What is God telling them to do? To remember.

That's the first thing. There are things God wants you to remember and says that you need to remember. And you know I talk about remembering a lot because it is a weakness of mine.

I am a forgetful person naturally. My Tammy will agree with that. Probably anybody that knows me very well knows that I forget things a lot.

[6 : 27] Do you think God knows that about me? Do you forget things easily? Or is it just me? How many of you forget things easily? Okay. Do you think God knows that about you?

Yes. Here's the thing. God knows that mankind in general is forgetful. We tend to forget things. Something might happen and it's right in front of us and it's right there and that's easy then to take note of it.

It's easy to remember it. But then we leave that and time goes by and activities happen in our lives and before you know it, guess what happens to this thing back here? We forget about it. We forget about it.

Out of sight, out of mind. You've heard that expression before, right? We are a forgetful people. Some more than others maybe, but as a whole we are a forgetful people. The Israelites were no different.

And he was saying here, he was reminding them, he says, you shall. He doesn't say maybe. He doesn't say this isn't a big deal. He says you shall. This is something you need to do.

[7:29] You shall remember all the ways which the Lord your God led you these 40 years. What is it that they're supposed to remember? Remember what he did.

Remembering how God has interacted with you. Remembering the things that God has done for you. And here he gives them a very specific thing. You know, God led the people out of Egypt.

They were in bondage for almost 400 years. They were slaves. God led them out of Egypt. They failed. They wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years because of it. But in that 40 years, even with their failure, even with their shortcomings, what did God continue to do for them?

Take care of them. He continued to lead them. He continued to guide them. And it talks in this chapter about other blessings in that time that God gave them. When they didn't have food and they were out in the wilderness, what did God do?

It talks about it in this chapter. He gave them manna from heaven. God supplied that need for them in the middle of nowhere out in the wilderness. It talks about when they didn't have water, what did God do?

[8:47] He brought water out of a rock. A rock of flint is what it says there. They didn't have water. If you're out in the middle of the wilderness and don't have any water, do you start hitting rocks? Anybody? Any of you do that?

I mean, wouldn't you think that was odd if somebody... I've heard that if you hit a rock, water's just going to come out of it. That doesn't happen, does it? God worked in a miraculous way to provide them with water.

Forty years in the wilderness. If all of us right now took what we had and walked out into the wilderness, what would happen over a period of 40 years? Other than the food and water thing, what else would happen?

Our size would change? It would get bigger or smaller, you think? There'd be a lot of things. What about the clothes that you're wearing?

What would happen to those clothes that you're wearing? They'd wear out, right? What did God say He did for them in those 40 years? Their clothes didn't wear out.

[9:44] What did He say about their shoes that they had on their feet? They didn't wear out either. Is that miraculous? Yes. And God is saying, remember the things that I did for you over this 40 years that you were in the wilderness.

Now, when they were in the wilderness, did they grumble at all? Oh, yeah. They grumbled. They complained. But God was still faithful, wasn't He? He still supplied their needs.

And God is telling them, remember that. So what does that have to do with you and I today? This isn't just history lessons. Remember what He has done for us.

What has God done for you? Okay, everything. What does that include? What has God done for you? I mean, first, if we can't identify it, we can't remember it.

The first step is identifying what we need to remember. What has God done for you? He's given us life. If you've accepted Jesus Christ, your sins are washed away and He's given you life. Spiritual life.

[10:48] New life. Everlasting life. What else? Is that it? Where did you come from this morning?

When you woke up this morning, where were you? Were you in church? Where were you? Home. You were in a house. Okay. Is that a blessing?

And then you walked here to church. Anybody walk? Okay, of course not. It was like negative two out. How'd you get here?

A car. Is that a blessing? Did you get dressed before you came here? Did you put a coat on? Some of you don't put coats on. That's a bad question. It's two degrees.

Put a coat on. All these things are blessings. And God is saying, you need to remember the things that I have done for you. And you know, if we went through and talked with each one of us and had an opportunity to share, and I know we don't have time for that, but if we went through person by person and I wanted you to say, tell me something that God has done for you over the last 10 years.

[11:52] And I'm not talking just providing you food, but something God has done in your life, a healing, a relationship restored, a sickness that He helped you to get over.

How many of you could name something that God has done in your life? And God, it's saying here, remember that. Don't let that fade. So often we are people that it's like, God, it's what have you done for me lately?

We don't think about the things God did for us 10 years ago. We think, oh, that's way in the past. God is saying here, no, He expects us to remember that, the blessings that God has given us.

Remember the things that I have done for you. And the other thing God tells them, look in verse 5, you shall also consider, in other words, He's saying you also need to remember this, consider in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.

So this, if we consider it, it's something else we're supposed to remember. What is it? That God sometimes corrects us? Does God want us to remember that?

[13:00] Why? Why does He want us to remember the times that we were corrected? Think of this, when you were a child, do you remember any of the times you were corrected by your parent?

You may not remember all of them, but do you remember the correction of your parents? I do. And I was, I think I was a pretty good kid, but I, dad's shrugging over there.

But I remember a time in particular, and I think I've mentioned this before, that I got a spanking. And I looked at dad, and I said, that didn't hurt. I think we all understand and recognize, I must not have been a very bright kid.

We all recognize that's the wrong thing to say, right? It was not the end of the spanking. We'll just put it that way. But here's the thing. When I look back and think of the fact that I was corrected as a child, I understand that was necessary for me.

And the reason that I was corrected is because my parents loved me. They didn't just let me go on my way and do whatever, because that would not be showing love. So God is also saying, remember the times that He has corrected us, that He has gotten us back on the right track when we have started to drift off of it.

[14:17] How many of us can say there's been a time in our life when maybe we started getting off track and God had to bring us back to it? God is also saying, remember that. He then tells us some things that we are supposed to do and He tells us some do's and don'ts in this chapter.

Look at verse 10. Here's a do. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. So when you have things around you, blessings that God has given you, what are you supposed to do?

Bless God. Praise Him. Thank Him for those things. That's a do that we are supposed to do. And then He follows it up in verse 11 with a don't. He says, beware that you forget not the Lord your God in not keeping His commandments and His judgments and His statutes which I command you this day.

So He's saying here, the do is bless God, the don't is what? It's forgetting to bless God. It's kind of the opposite side of that, isn't it?

We need to be praising and blessing God for the things that we have in our lives because if we don't, there is a danger.

[15:33] And this is what I really want you to think about this morning because in the world that we live in, one of the things that the world tells us that we need to be concerned about and probably something all of us at one time or another have worried about is whether we're going to have enough.

Have you ever worried about that in your life? Whether you're going to have enough food, whether you're going to have enough money, whether you're going to have enough of whatever. How many of you at one point in your life have worried about that?

Might be now. I don't know. And the world tells us we need to be concerned about having enough, right? Isn't that the message that we get? What we don't often talk about is the danger that comes from prosperity, the danger that comes from having enough because that is a danger the world doesn't really warn us about.

It warns us about not having enough and the danger of that. You need to save your money. You need to do this so you can supply your needs. The world doesn't say you need to be worried about having too much. Any of you ever worry about having too much?

Any of you ever look at your bank account and say, I got too much in here. This is a terrible problem. We don't think of that end of it. But God says there is something here we need to be aware of, a danger of prosperity.

[16:53] And again, that is so foreign to our way of thinking. Even in some churches, they talk about, you know, if you're living the life God wants, you're going to be healthy and wealthy.

And there's a danger in prosperity. I want you to look in verse 12. Does that sound like a good scenario?

You have a goodly house. What does goodly mean? Beautiful house. Nice house. Nice home. You got a nice home. What else does it talk about here?

You know, I guess it said something before that. You've eaten and you're full. What does that mean? You got plenty to eat. So you got plenty to eat.

You've got a beautiful home. Sound good so far? And when your herds and your flocks multiply. Now, I know not many of us have herds and flocks of things, but what does that really mean?

[18:06] In this day and age, if you had herds and flocks that were multiplying, what did that mean about you? You were wealthy. You were gaining. You were getting more and more. Does that sound good?

All right. That's a simple question. Does that sound good? All right. And your silver, we understand this one. And your silver and gold is multiplied. You know what that means, right?

Your bank account is growing. This is getting better and better, right? How many of you say, yeah, I want to be in this category right here? And all that you have is multiplied.

This is giving a scenario where everything's going great. Everything you have is successful. Your house is nice. You've got plenty to eat. You're healthy. You're wealthy. All the great things are happening.

Your bank account, no worries there at all. But God is telling them in that there is a danger. These are things we want, don't we, in our lives?

[19:05] We want our bank accounts to grow, right? Let's be honest with each other, don't we? I mean, there's no reason not to say it. We do. But we also have to understand the danger that comes with that.

Look in verse 14 because it begins to outline the danger. Then, so after all these good things, you have all these blessings. Then your heart be lifted up and you forget that the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage.

It says your heart's lifted up and you forget. What does it mean that your heart is lifted up? I mean, that sounds like it'd be a good thing, right? What does it mean? Pride?

Arrogance? What is it really saying, though? What's going on here? Self-reliance? Fat and happy? Beginning to think that we're in control.

See, these are all the dangers of prosperity. And I'm not saying that prosperity is a bad thing, but understand the dangers that go with it. And I think living in the United States, this needs to be preached more often because we are prosperous.

[20:20] Whether you want to believe that or not, whether you think that or not, doesn't change the fact that we are prosperous. We live in a nation where most of us have plenty to eat every day. We live in a nation where we have homes to live in.

We have cars to drive. That is different than a lot of the world. We are prosperous, period. And He's telling us there is a danger here that we lift up our hearts and we forget about God.

We forget how much we need God. I remember years ago when Tammy and I went with a youth group that we had and we took a group to Mexico on a mission trip.

And we had, I forget how many youth we had on the trip. Do you remember? 25, 30? I don't know. We went a couple times. But anyway, one of the ministries we did was a dump in Tijuana.

Where people would go there every day just to collect whatever they could out of the landfill, out of the garbage to try to sell to get money. That's all they could do to try to get by. But you know what?

[21:23] As we talked with some of those people, it really opened our eyes. Because you know what those people were doing? They were praising God.

In the midst of seemingly having nothing, they were praising God for every little thing that they found or that they had. Recognizing that that was God taking care of them.

As a matter of fact, it opened a lot of the youth size too because I think they realized these people that had nothing were more thankful than us that had everything. Because we were starting to go down this road.

And I think it's a constant for us that we have to be reminded of it to kind of pull back. We take for granted all the blessings that we have. And forget that they're all things that God has given us.

We let our hearts be lifted up and we think we somehow deserve it. Think we've somehow earned it. Jump to verse 17. And then you say in your heart, and here's the real danger in what it's talking about when your heart is lifted up.

[22:28] You say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. There is the danger, folks. We begin to think we've done it.

We've earned it. We've accomplished it. We deserve it. Is it easy to think that way? Is it? I think it is.

I'll just talk about myself. I don't mind talking about myself. I'll talk about my faults. I got plenty of them. It's easy for me to go down the road of thinking, well, yeah, I got good grades in school, and then I went to college, and I got a degree, and I did everything right, so I obviously deserve everything I have, right?

Right? Don't I deserve it? I worked hard, and I earned it, didn't I? Didn't I? Didn't I? Didn't I? Didn't I? Didn't I? What's the answer to that question?

There's the danger, beginning to think, I earned it, I deserve it, I did it. It's what the Bible is saying here. And you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand has gotten me this well.

[23:39] That is the danger. Because verse 18 says what our attitude should be. But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He, He that gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant, which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Who's the one that gives us power to get wealth, power to get food, power to get clothing? Who gives us the ability we have to do all that? God does.

We cannot take any of the glory for ourselves. We cannot begin to think that we deserve it, that we earned it, so it's ours. The only reason you earn it is because God allowed you to earn it. The only reason you earn it is God allowed you to have the health that you have to do it.

God allowed you the means. God allowed you to be born where you were born so that you'd have that opportunity to begin with. What did you do to be born in the United States?

Any one of us in here, what did you do to be born in the United States? Not a thing, did you? We didn't have a checklist to say, oh, where do you want to be born?

[24:55] Oh, I think I'll choose the United States instead of the middle of Africa somewhere. We didn't choose that. God did. He gave you the ability.

He gave you the place to be born where you had the opportunities you have. It all starts from God, doesn't it? Not from us. The danger of prosperity is we begin to think that we have done it.

I had about six other verses we were going to turn to and look at. We might have to look at some of them next week. But what I want you to remember is the danger of prosperity in not thinking that it is the power of my hand.

It is my ability that's gotten me what I have. Remember, it's God. God allowed you to be born where you were born. He allowed you to have the parents that you have. He allowed you to have the job that you have.

He gave you the health that you could go to the job that you have. He gave you the intelligence to work the job that you have. It all comes from God. He's the one that should get the praise for it.

[26:01] We are very prosperous as a whole compared to most of the world. Remember, it's God that deserves the praise.

Never forget that. Let's pray. Lord God, thank you for this day that you've given us for this morning. I thank you for your word.

And Lord, as you talk to your people here, you are reminding them. You are telling them, don't forget all that I've done for you. Don't forget that all that you have, I've allowed you to have.

That it's not your hand that's done it. It's not your hand that's earned it, but I've given you the ability to get that. Lord, help us to remember that same thing. We are a blessed people as a whole.

I know that sometimes we have needs that we can't always meet. I understand that. But Lord, as a whole, we have so much that you've allowed us to have. Help us to remember that it's yours.

[26:59] Help us to remember that you're the one that's given us the ability to work or to do or to accomplish. It all starts with you. So help us never to become prideful.

Help us never to lift up our hearts and begin to think of it as our accomplishments, but to understand that it comes because of you. Remind us of that each and every day because we are quick to forget.

And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. You know, as we close, the altar's always open. And I encourage you, if the Lord's speaking to your heart, respond. I know it's easy to stay in your seat and think, I'll wait, whatever.

But if the Lord speaks to you, come and pray. But this morning, just consider all the things that God has allowed you to have. And understand there are blessings that come from God.

They're not things... Don't say, I've earned it. I've done it. God has allowed you to have it. Give Him the praise. Stand if you're able. Take your hymnal and turn to page 680.

[27:59] 680. 680. For I know what e'er befall me, Jesus, do with all things well.

For I know what e'er befall me, Jesus, do with all things well. All the way my Savior leads me To each winding path I tread.

Gives me grace for every trial. Pleased me with the living bread. Though my weary steps may falter And my soul of thirst may be Gushing from the rock before me Glow a spring of joy I see Gushing from the rock before me Glow a spring of joy I see All the way my Savior leads me All the fullness of His love Perfect rest to me is promised In my Father's house above When my spirit of immortal Thuis its flag to realms of day

This my song through endless ages Jesus, let me all the way This my song through endless ages Jesus, let me all the way Remember this week as you consider All your blessings that they come from God Not things that we have earned But things that God has allowed us To have in our lives. Let's close with prayer.

Lord God, thank you again For your presence in this place And in our lives And for the knowledge that as we leave here That we don't leave you here That you go with us And we just thank you for that. And Lord, as we go through our lives Lord, the message you had for your people You have for us as your people today That we are to remember Your goodness Not to begin to think that we've done it on our own But to always give you the credit And the praise And just the thanks for all that we have Help us to be a people that do that Again, we thank you for your presence here And it's in the name of Jesus we pray Amen