

# A Threat to Faithfulness: Prosterity

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Date: 30 October 2016

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[0:00] So how about I pray for us? Heavenly Father, thanks so much for your word, the Bible. Thank you that although what is written here was said to a particular people a few thousand years ago, that it still has a message for us here today.

And so, Father, we pray that you would help us to understand what that is and to live in light of it. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, in life, we all forget things.

And sometimes not remembering things is not a big deal. So I often don't remember where I put my keys, which is frustrating, but it's not the end of the world.

Sometimes I don't remember how old my kids are when people ask me their ages. Again, it's not a big deal. They never find out. But there are some things which matter more if we don't remember. For example, if we, Michelle and I, don't remember to send one of our parents a birthday card for their birthday, we've discovered that matters. Or I was talking with my Bible study group last week, and one of them admitted that when he rang the home of his girlfriend at the time, her mother picked up the phone, and when he went to ask if his girlfriend was there, he completely forgot her name.

[1:18] He said, is your daughter there? Needless to say, that relationship didn't continue much longer.

But God had someone else better in mind, whom he later married, and you'll be glad to hear he remembers her name. Or like some friends of ours who came home from shopping one day, took all the food inside, and then forgot to bring their three-month-old out of the car until 20 minutes later. Remembering your children is kind of important, isn't it? You see, there are some things in life that we really need to remember. What's more, remembering helps you to respond rightly.

So occasionally we have to remind their children just how much we've done for them, including the pain of giving birth to them. Not that it was too painful for me, but we need to remind them so that they might respond rightly to us.

As we return to our series in Deuteronomy this morning, that's effectively what Moses is doing. Moses tells Israel to remember who God is and what he's done for them, so that they might respond rightly by obeying him.

[2:34] You can see this by the way the ideas of obedience and remembering keep popping up in the chapter. So let me just show you the big picture of the chapter. If you've got your Bibles there, look at verse 1.

Here we see the theme of following every command or obeying every command. It pops up again in verse 6. Do you see verse 6? Observe the commands or obey the commands that the Lord your God is giving you.

Or even at the end of the chapter, he says you'll be destroyed for not obeying the Lord your God. You see this theme of obedience pops up. But so does the theme of remembering.

So verse 2, remember how the Lord your God... Or down in verse 11, towards the bottom of the page, be careful that you do not forget. Or in other words, remember.

Or over on the next column, verse 18, but remember the Lord your God. And verse 19, if you ever forget the Lord your God.

[3:33] You see, the big idea is to remember God, that they might be encouraged to obey God. Remember God and what he's done for them, so that they might respond to God in obedience.

That's the big idea of the chapter. It's the big application for us, really. And for Israel in particular, obedience was important because it enabled them to enjoy the gifts of life and land that God was giving them.

And so we're at point 1 in your outlines and verse 1 in your Bibles. He says, Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.

And now, just to remind you what's happening, God has rescued Israel out of Egypt and brought them to the promised land. And the first generation out of Egypt did not obey God, and so they did not enter the land.

Instead, they missed out on the life that God wanted to give them. And they end up wandering the wilderness for 40 years until that first generation died out. But now a second generation has grown up, and they're back at the border of the land.

[ 4 : 46 ] And so Deuteronomy is basically three sermons by Moses to this second generation of Israelites to encourage them not to make the same mistake as their parents.

Moses' first sermon was chapters 1 to 4, which gave them lessons from their history. And Moses' second sermon, chapters 5 to 26, the long one, is about where he gives those commands and encourages Israel to obey them.

Some chapters are him giving the commands, and some chapters are him encouraging Israel to obey, like today's chapter. And they need to obey so that they might enjoy God's physical blessings for them.

You see verse 1 again? Then obey so that you may live and increase and enter and possess, he says. These are the things God wants to give them.

And as we've seen, their obedience was not to earn them life and land. God has already promised it. It was a gift to them. But in order to enjoy God's gift of life and land, they had to obey.

[ 5 : 54 ] Otherwise, they'd end up like their parents who missed out and were judged. I said before, it's kind of like a parent saying to their child, I have a gift for you in the kitchen. Come follow me.

If the child obeys, they get to enjoy that gift. Their obedience does not earn the gift. I mean, the parent has already bought it, already promised it. Rather, their obedience simply means they get to enjoy it.

But if they disobey and don't follow their parent into the kitchen, then by default, they miss out and actually get in trouble for being disobedient.

It's the same for Israel here. God has already rescued them from Egypt, already promised life and land in all its fullness. But to enjoy those blessings, these gifts, they need to follow God into the land.

And they need to keep God's commands while in the land. Otherwise, they'll miss out on all these gifts and be judged instead. And so Moses says, obey God's words so that, verse 1, you may enjoy the life and land he's giving you.

[ 7 : 00 ] And to encourage them to obey, Moses says, verse 2, remember. Do you see, verse 2? Remember how the Lord your God had led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known. Why? Well, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord, he says.

Your clothes did not wear out, your feet did not swell during these 40 years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you. Here, Moses wants them to remember how God disciplined them in the desert.

The word for discipline in the Bible can mean either to punish or to train. And so, you know, a teacher might punish a student for doing wrong. But an athlete might train their body to do right. Of course, these ideas sometimes go together. So, as a parent, when we discipline our children for doing wrong, it's both punishing them for doing wrong, and hopefully at the same time training them to do what is right.

[ 8 : 14 ] That's the hope, isn't it? Well, Israel's wandering in the desert did both as well. It punished the first generation for refusing to obey God the first time around, but it also trained or taught the second generation to do better than their parents, to depend on God's word for life.

See verse 3 again? To teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. You see, God humbled them and then provided for them so that they might learn that they are ultimately dependent on God.

God's word sent the manna, which was like a wafer kind of bread, to feed them. God said, let there be manna, and there was. And so, ultimately, it's his word that fed them.

What's more, verse 4, God's word sustained them so that their clothes did not wear out. I don't know if you know this, but the clothes store Target promises that their clothes won't ever fall apart or shrink, stretch, or fade.

And if you keep reading the sentence, it says, after a few washes. But I'm guessing they would have faded and stretched and fallen apart after 40 years of everyday wear in the desert.

[ 9 : 31 ] You see, Israel's clothes did not wear out because they got them from Target. They did not wear out because God's word sustained them. God said, let their clothes last even longer than Target.

Not that, of course, but something like that. You see, Moses is reminding them of God's discipline in the desert, where God was acting like a father, teaching his son to know that they don't live on what we see, on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord that sends the bread and the clothes and so on.

It's ultimately God's word that sent the manna and sustained their clothes, that enabled them to live, you see. They had to remember this lesson, that they might keep obeying God's word that sustained them and provided for them.

And so keep enjoying life. And the lesson is the same for us. I mean, verse 3, Moses says, a man or mankind does not live on bread alone. He doesn't limit it to just Israel, does he?

In other words, what Moses says to Israel here is true for us today. For it was God's word that gave us life at creation, you might remember. And so on the next slide, I think it's a verse from Genesis chapter 1.

[ 10 : 44 ] Notice, God said, he spoke, there's his word, let us make mankind in our image. God's word, you see, created us, gave us life.

Or the one at the bottom there, it says, the sun is the radiance of God, Jesus is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being. And notice, sustaining all things.

How? By his powerful word. You see, we may think that it's our lungs that keep us breathing air and keep us alive. But it's actually God's word that sustains and enables our lungs to keep breathing and keep us alive.

We just forget because we can't see it. But God has said, let your lungs keep working, and they do. And so that breath of air you just took, and that breath, is because of your lungs, yes, but ultimately because of God's word that is sustaining your lungs.

Or we may think that food, such as bread, is what keeps us living, but who has created everything and enables food to keep growing. It's God and his word. So we are ultimately dependent on him.

[ 11 : 59 ] One busy night last week, the kids actually got McDonald's for dinner, and one of them said, when it was on its way, she said, I'm starving, if I don't get Macca soon, I will die.

And I thought afterwards that I should have said, kids do not live on Maccas alone, but on every word of God. See, and it's not just God's word that enables us to live physically, to keep living physically, it's also God's word that has given us new life spiritually.

And so on the next slide, we read from 1 Peter chapter 1 that you have been born again, given new spiritual life. How? Through the living and enduring word of God.

How does that work? Well, the next sentence tells us, Paul says, you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth. What is this word? Well, it's the gospel of your salvation.

See, God's word sent God's son to die for us. And God's word says that if you believe in Jesus, you will be saved. You see, this word has not only given us physical life, it has also given us eternal spiritual life.

[ 13 : 13 ] And it will even give us eternal physical life later too. When we face hardships like Israel did in the wilderness, it reminds us of the reality that we are not as self-sufficient as we think we are or would like to think we are.

We are actually dependent, whether we like it or not, on God who controls the world by his word. I mean, that's how kings control their kingdoms, isn't it? They give commands by their word.

So also God. His word gave us life and sustains our life. And his word in the gospel gave us new spiritual life. And if it's God's word that gives us all this, then why on earth would we ever ignore it?

Why would we ever look for something else to listen to and to follow? That's why we spend so much time each Sunday hearing God's word read and explained because we are ultimately dependent on

it for life.

And this was Jesus' point in our second reading. God's word is ultimately what gives life and so God's word is what he should obey and not Satan. And Israel was to remember this lesson from their wandering in the wilderness.

[14:22] That God's word gives life so that they might continue to obey God's word, his commands, and enjoy life. That's the connection. But they're also to obey God's word in response to what God is giving them.

So point to verse 6, he says, observe the commands of the Lord your God walking in obedience to him and revering him. Why? Well, verse 7, for or because the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with brooks and streams and deep springs gushing out in the valleys and hills, a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey, a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing, a land where the rocks are iron and you can just simply dig copper out of the hills with your hands, so to speak.

You see here, they had to obey or observe God's commands. Why? Well, verse 7, because of the land God is giving them. And notice how Moses explains how rich and good this land is, this land or this inheritance as it's called elsewhere.

It's as though he's saying, remember just what God has given you, how good it is, so that you might obey him in thankfulness. I remember when one boy got an iPod for Christmas, it was such a good and expensive gift, that he said to his mother, thanks so much, I'll go and set the table for lunch now.

Now his mum had asked him to set the table that Christmas day but he was more than happy to obey. Why? Well, out of gratitude for the good gift he'd received. Of course, Boxing Day then came and he was less inclined to obey because he started to forget so he had to remember just how good the gift was.

[16:14] That's what Moses is doing here, reminding Israel just how rich and good this land was, their gift that they might obey and give God thanks and praise.

See verse 10? Verse 10 should still be with the previous paragraph. He says, When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God. Why?

Well, for the good land he has given you. You see, they are to obey God in thanks and after they are in the land they are to keep praising God in thanks.

and it's similar for us too. God has a heavenly land or inheritance that he's bringing us into and so in response we are to obey and praise him.

And so the next slide we read from 1 Peter chapter 1 these verses. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Well, in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living or certain hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance land that can never perish, spoil or fade kept in heaven for you.

[17:25] We are to praise God for the living hope of heaven we have which I know the Bible calls elsewhere glorious, rich, good. I wonder how often we pause to praise God for the things he has and will give us.

It's easy to forget isn't it? I mentioned before that I've realised I sometimes pray for something really regularly because it's a big deal and then once it's been answered I kind of just move on and forget to thank and praise God for answering it.

Or I complain about what God has not given me and forget all he has given me. But a right response to all God has given us including the guarantee of our own land is to obey him and praise him in thanks.

And what's more if we regularly praise and thank God it will keep us from forgetting God when life is good. Point 3 verse 11 He says Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God failing to observe his commands his laws and his decrees that I am giving you today.

Notice by the way here that forgetting God and disobeying him go hand in hand. When we disobey God we are forgetting him whether consciously or not. It's like we say well if we remember who God is and we disobey him it's like we say well forget you God I'm going to do this anyway.

[18:49] Sometimes we unconsciously forget God and we do something and go oh I shouldn't have done that that's not pleasing to God. Forgetting God and disobeying him go hand in hand and Moses is saying make sure you don't forget and disobey particularly when life is good because that's when it's easy to forget.

See verse 12 otherwise when you eat and are satisfied when you build fine houses and settle down and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery.

You see when times are good when you know our houses are nice and things are going okay it does happen from time to time it's easy to forget. It's easy to think that we've achieved what we are enjoying.

For example if you're going on holidays which a number of families are away today on it's easy to have a good time and think I've worked hard for this holiday I'm going to enjoy it and then suddenly you forget God.

And so you end up taking not just a break from work and routine but from God as well. but God has given you everything including the ability to achieve all this. Notice verse 15 he says he has led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness and that thirsty and waterless land with its venomous snakes and scorpions he brought you water out of a hard rock he gave you the manner to eat in the wilderness something that your ancestors had never known to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

[ 20 : 28 ] You may say to yourself my power and my strength and my hands have produced this wealth for me but remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth and so confirms his covenant which he swore to your ancestors as it is today.

Notice the repetition of he God has done it all for them he is the one who has saved them and led them and provided for them and verse 18 he is the one who enables them gives them the ability to produce wealth.

this is what Moses tried to show them back in verse 3 that behind everything we have is God's word enabling and providing and so they are to remember God because if they forget they will disobey and follow other gods and then find themselves judged.

See verse 19 if you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed like the nations the Lord destroyed before you so you will be destroyed for not obeying the Lord your God.

You see with times are good for Israel it's very easy to forget God and Moses saying don't remember everything you have is from him to start with and if you forget then you could disobey and indeed walk away and be judged and it's similar for us too you see God has given us everything we need so on the next slide a very simple verse from 2 Peter chapter 1 God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness can't get much clearer than that can you?

[ 22 : 14 ] See God has not only physically created us and sustaining us by his word but he's also done everything to save us from our sin for as I said before God's word sent God's son Jesus to die for us and to take the punishment for our sin in our place so that we can be saved from it and the same word have raised Jesus from the dead proving he will raise us too and bring us into our heavenly inheritance land and God has given us his spirit to enable us to grow in godliness until he brings us home to that land you see God really has given us everything we need for life and godliness and we need to remember and not forget this and we need to keep looking back to the cross and considering Christ and all that God has done through him so that we might be encouraged to keep living for him keep obeying and pleasing him in thankfulness for if we don't remember if we forget God like Israel sadly does end up doing then it can mean walking away from God and facing judgment

I remember a guy from one of my old churches who started off coming to church and bible study it was a guys group and he was looking for work and we were praying for him over the course of about a year I think and then he got a job in the bank and he did quite well for himself and he started to kind of withdraw a bit and then he's got a promotion at the bank and then we kind of didn't see him again and we caught up with him or actually I didn't a friend of mine caught up with him oh what's going on oh life just kind of got so busy I kind of forgot about bible study and kind of forgot about church in other words he forgot about God see his prayers were answered life was good he got his job he got his promotion and then suddenly he forgets all that God had done for him in Christ and now as far as I know to this day he no longer calls himself a Christian and so we need to remember

God and what he's done for us in Christ so what I want to do to finish is to suggest two things to help us remember so the big idea remember God so that we might keep obeying God living for him but here's two ways to help us remember at first keep praising and thanking God regularly verse 10 has already said this as part of our right response but it also helps us remember I mean if you're thanking God and praising him regularly then you're going to be conscious of God aren't you and so for one family I know at dinner time before they say grace they would ask each child for one thing they could thank God for before as part of saying grace for their meal sometimes it can backfire one of them said thanks that mummy cooked and not daddy but at least there's something to be thankful for he reminded us of God it's an antidote to not forgetting God that's the first one and the second one is not so first one praise and thank him regularly secondly make every effort to keep growing Peter if you go on the next slide continues in this passage this is a bit of a longer reading but stay with me he says make every effort to add to your faith goodness knowledge self-control perseverance godliness brotherly kindness and love notice for if you possess these qualities in increasing measure if you're growing they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ but if anyone does not have them he is nearsighted and blind and notice has forgotten that he's been cleansed from his past sins you see the Bible says if you want to make sure that you don't forget God and all he's done for you then make every effort to keep growing to keep growing in godliness and so on keep growing as a Christian that's the second antidote to forgetting it helps us to keep remembering Christ and pleasing him so make every effort to keep growing in the faith and keep making time to read the Bible to come to Bible study or church to ask after each other if you notice someone missing text then ask after them help them and each other keep growing in the faith and make every effort especially when times are good like when you go on holidays someone told me last week I forgot to ask permission to share this one but it's fine I'll ask for forgiveness later and that's really bad bobbling really taking all that glad you laughed a joke but someone told me last week that her father said it's when you go on holidays that you especially need to remember to read your Bible and pray when you go on holidays that's especially when you need to read your Bible and pray because that's when it's easiest to forget God and it's true in fact when we go on holidays one of the first things that gets packed now is the Bible because we've actually forgotten it before terrible for a minister I know but that's what we humans are like we forget one guy I heard about actually forgot the day of his wedding and so booked a camping trip with his mates

[ 27 : 39 ] I'm pretty sure he realised before the wedding either way his fiancée was not impressed you see forgetting some things does matter and so we had to keep praising and thanking God keep making every effort to grow in godliness so that we might remember and so live for him let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for your word to us we thank you for the reminder that we need to remember you and all you've done for us that we might not drift away but keep living lives that please you and so help us father to keep being thankful to keep praising you to keep making every effort to grow in you that we might always remember that we might always consider Christ and all he's done for us and so be encouraged to keep living for you we pray these things in Jesus name amen too cm amen