

God Blesses Humility

WHY SHOULD WE BE HUMBLE IN A PRIDEFUL WORLD?

Focal Verses • DEUTERONOMY 8:6–20

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will IDENTIFY the Lord as the source of all blessings, APPRECIATE the blessings God gives us, and COMMIT to being humble because God is the reason for our blessings.

In Focus

As he stood outside his car at the gas station, Aaron saw Robert pull up at the next pump. “Now there’s a sight I thought I’d never see,” he thought. “Robbie Rich pumping his own gas.”

Aaron thought back to the time when everyone referred to him as “Robbie Rich” because he had a lot of money. He once owned four furniture and appliance stores in the Black community.

As Aaron drove off, he thought about the time he had lunch at a table adjacent to Robert. “Robbie” was talking to another man about how he became a success. Everything in his conversation was, “I . . . I . . . I . . .” Even then, Aaron remembered thinking that Robert was taking an awful lot of credit for the success of his stores.

Just a couple of years later, some large retailers opened stores with online shopping and free delivery that were able to offer lower prices than Robert’s. Aaron had heard that after he had to close all but one of his stores, Robert got up in church and said he wondered why God allowed his business to go down. “Humph,” Bryce said to himself as he turned into his driveway. “It’s funny how Robert gave no credit to God for his success, but he wanted to blame God for his downfall!”

Why do some people stop seeking God when they become successful? How can we avoid that trap of abandoning God when we achieve success?



Keep in Mind

“Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day”
(Deuteronomy 8:11, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV Deuteronomy 8:6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

12 Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

13 And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee

forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

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

20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

The People, Places, and Times

Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is Moses' last sermon to the people of Israel right before they finally enter the Promised Land. In these three speeches (Deuteronomy 1–4; 5–26; 27–34), he reiterates the Law handed down on Mount Sinai. Many sections of this sermon repeat what has already been stated. Other sections update the Law from a religion to be practiced in the wilderness to one that is practiced in a stable homeland. Moses looks to the future for the nation.

Manna. Considered to be food from heaven, manna is a grain-like substance which sustained the Israelites during their years in the wilderness. The small, round grains (or flakes) appeared around the Israelites' camp each morning with the dew. They were gathered, ground, and baked into cakes or boiled. The name "manna" may have come from the question the Israelites must have asked when they first saw the grains: "What is it (*man hu*)?"

The Bible emphasizes that God caused manna to appear at the right time and place to meet their needs. Manna could not be stored and, therefore, was of little use to the Israelites beyond its immediate use. Therefore, Israel had to rely on God daily for their provision of manna.

Background

Today's lesson text is part of the third sermon, which is related to the historical section in Deuteronomy 5. Like the two previous sermons, it is based on the first commandment. Israel is admonished to observe or be careful to follow the commandment of Yahweh. As in previous sections, obedience to the Lord is linked to blessings and prosperity. The people are again reminded of all that the Lord has done for them over the last 40 years. They are reminded of the wilderness years and God's providence during that time.

This sermon, like the others, focuses on the future years, when all of Israel's suffering and God's role in alleviating that suffering may be forgotten. Additionally, the lure of other gods would become more appealing as generations with no personal knowledge of the Exodus and succeeding events would become vulnerable to violating the first commandment.

God's people needed to understand that their blessings came by His hand. Their prosperity would be parallel with their obedience. The Lord knew His people. He knew that after many years of prosperity, Israel might well begin to credit themselves for their own prosperity and well-being. Despite repeated warnings, Israel did begin to disregard the presence of the Lord's directing hand in their history and their future.

At-A-Glance

1. Remember God's Blessings
(Deuteronomy 8:6–10)
2. Don't Become Proud and Forget
the Lord (vv. 11–20)

In Depth

1. Remember God's Blessings (Deuteronomy 8:6–10)

God had provided for Israel in every aspect of their lives. They needed to remember the way through which the Lord had brought them. They needed to recall the times of prosperity, but they also needed to remember the bitter and difficult times. God had to humble Israel for a purpose.

God's purpose for Israel was knowledge—knowledge of their faith. The Lord first wanted to show what Israel was made of and tested them to that end. He also wanted them to know what was really important. The Lord was bringing them into a prosperous land. Moses was reminding Israel of what God had already done as well as what He promised to do.

It may be difficult for those in the Western world to understand the significance of the features of the Promised Land which are named in verses 7–8. Israel had spent 40 years as a nomadic culture. For such people, water is a precious resource, especially when much of the land is desert territory. Additionally, a people who have had no homeland would greatly treasure a land wherein there was plentiful water, grains, fruit trees, and honey.

They had come a long way from wandering in the desert. Israel would lack nothing in the land that God was giving them. Minerals were rich in the land—iron and brass (copper). They would be prosperous and contented and filled with thanksgiving to the Lord.

Moses gave repeated warnings from God to Israel, realizing that remembering God would prove to be difficult as the years of prosperity continued. They were God's people, however, and they were to receive His blessings with thanksgiving and humility, not pride. The Israelites needed to be a disciplined people who remained loyal to the commands and statutes of the Deliverer. God's chosen people were never to forget His loving acts of redemption on their behalf.

Why is it important for us to remember the source of our blessings and where we were before we received certain blessings?

2. Don't Become Proud and Forget the Lord (vv. 11–20)

Living in a present state of prosperity is no guarantee against future suffering. The bounty of blessings that the Lord was about to heap on top of the blessings He had already given would be overwhelming. Israel was warned to remember the Source of their blessings. After 40 long years of living in the wilderness, Israel probably could easily begin to think that they had earned the right to live in the Promised Land. They needed to remember that it was only through God's goodness that they were about to enter the land flowing with milk and honey.

It is often a temptation to trust ourselves instead of the Lord. When life feels great, God often gets pushed to the sidelines. As Israel entered its years of prosperity, the people might forget the hundreds of years of slavery. They might forget how Pharaoh's army almost returned them to bondage. The memory of the wilderness years could become faint and dim.

Perhaps Moses understood this tendency of human nature from firsthand experience, having gone from a life of prosperity to living in the wilderness as a shepherd. Yet, in the wilderness he found the Lord and God nurtured Moses' spirit until it grew in the knowledge of God.

Moses cautioned Israel against claiming self-sufficiency, as they had on some occasions in the desert. Such an attitude always leads to downfall: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18, KJV). A feeling of self-sufficiency can only exist when one has forgotten about the blessings of God.

Israel is admonished to remember that not only wealth, but the power and ability to gain that wealth is a gift from their God. The promise of prosperity had been made to their forebears and the Lord honors His promises. The blessings they received were not because of any goodness or merit on the part of the current generation.

The importance of keeping the first commandment is reiterated at the end of the sermon (vv. 19–20). In the bliss of prosperity, Israel must not forget that it was the Lord who brought them to this point. The years in the wilderness served to humble them in readiness to assume the life of prosperity and plenty associated with residence in the Promised Land.

A final note of caution about potential sins is included in the sermon's close—specifically concerning forgetfulness and rebellion. If they forgot what God had done for them, they would be susceptible to rebellion against Him. Only sin could cause a breach in the covenant between God and His people. God wanted His people to know that disregarding Him brought serious consequences, just as obedience to Him brought His blessings and great responsibility.

Israel was unique from other nations. It was set apart by the Lord God Almighty. Forgetting about the God who brought them to the Promised Land would lead to destruction. Israel's distinction from other nations was that its people had heard and obeyed the voice of the Lord. As God's chosen people if they no longer heeded His voice, they would lose their distinguishing characteristic and suffer a terrible fate.

What was God's commandment to the people if they insisted on ignoring His servant Moses' warnings?

Search the Scriptures

1. Why was it important for Israel to remember it was God who blessed them?
2. What is the gift from God that enables His people to gain wealth?
3. Moses cautioned God's people against the danger of forgetting God. Their forgetfulness could bring on what sin?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Despite warnings and firsthand knowledge of God's blessings, Israel left the Lord and pursued other gods. That may seem strange to modern Christians until we examine our own use of manipulation, psychic readings, crystals, shrines, and mantras to gain power. When we rely on such devices, are we forsaking the wisdom and direction of the Lord?
2. Why does human nature lead us to rely more on ourselves and less on God once we are in a state of economic comfort and security? Why do people begin to give themselves credit for their success and prosperity instead of thanking God?

Liberating Lesson

Our modern society pushes us to have a favorable impression of ourselves, and that is good. In our push for self-affirmation, however, we often push God aside. In fact, the word ego has been taught as an acronym for "easing God out." The more we focus on self, the less we focus on God. This is a potential danger that lies within the self-help movement.

In the corporate world, people who have achieved economic success or have gone from "rags to riches" are often asked to share the secrets of their success with others. These persons often talk about market conditions,

personal success tips, goal setting, luck, and positive thinking. Less often do we hear successful people give credit to the Lord for giving them the ability to achieve that success, let alone acknowledge their privileged networks or six or seven-figure loans and investments they had to start their "self-made" success.

In the African American community, gains in economic success have brought a legion of other problems, from broken relationships to abandoned communities to mental health challenges. Considering these realities, we must question whether we are forgetting about God as our economic prosperity rises.

Application for Activation

List the things which sometimes block you from being a faithful servant of the Lord. Think of and list some times when you have devoted yourself to making money or economic success, rather than doing the work of the Lord.

Recall times when you may have credited yourself with results when the glory should have gone to the Lord. What happened to help you place your blessings in proper perspective?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Say It Correctly

Deuteronomy. dou-ter-AHN-uh-mee.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 29

Exodus 32–34

Psalms 17

DAY 30

Exodus 35–37

Psalms 18:1–5

DAY 31

Exodus 38–40

Psalms 18:6–13

DAY 32

Leviticus 1–4

Psalms 18:14–19

DAY 33

Leviticus 5–7

Psalms 18:20–29

DAY 34

Leviticus 8–10

Psalms 18:30–39

DAY 35

Leviticus 11–13

Psalms 18:40–50

Notes

God Protects

CAN GOD USE NON-BELIEVERS FOR HIS PURPOSES?

Focal Verses • JOSHUA 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will **AFFIRM** that God protects us and that we can trust in Him, **APPRECIATE** God's protection, and **EXPRESS** praises to God for His protection and faithfulness.

In Focus

Andre turned to his doctor as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, "Dr. Harris, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly, Dr. Harris said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?"

Dr. Harris was holding the handle of the door. On the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as the doctor opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness. Turning to his friend Andre, Dr. Harris said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing—I know my God is there, and that is enough."

When we face the unknown, it is an opportunity to trust God in new ways. When have you had to trust God to keep you in an uncertain situation?

SCAN FOR VIDEO



Keep in Mind

"And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us"
(Joshua 2:24, KJV).