

Deuteronomy 8 • How God Uses the Necessities

Introduction

One of the defining characteristics of mature Believers—the ones that stand out as role models to us—is that their spiritual walk never wavers. Whether in times of great need or great prosperity, their faith and trust and walk continue at the same intensity and on the same course. They have learned that God is the same regardless of the circumstances, and that one's faithfulness and obedience needs to be equally maintained during times of peace as times of crisis. In fact, God just doesn't use the times of hunger to get our attention, but equally requires it during times of plenty. In any case, the mark of a mature Believer is reliance not on the sustenance of this world but on His Word at all times in all things.

¹“All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. ²You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. ⁴Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. ⁵Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: This is NOT a trick question: What is the biblical meaning of the phrase “that you may live”?

A: Biblically speaking, those who reject God are judged by Him as already “dead”, in that their life is inevitably leading to the second death of eternity; those who accept and follow Him are judged “alive” because their choices are leading to eternal life.

Q: What is significant in the designation that it is “ALL” the commandments—all of God’s Law—that we must “be careful to do”?

A: We can't pick and choose but must be obedient to every commandment equally. Just because we don't murder, for instance, does not make up for treating a parent poorly.

Point: God's Word is a **COMPLETE** guide for life whose every instruction must be put into practice fully.

Q: According to v.2, what are the purposes of God's testing?

1. “that He might humble you” That is, to purge pride, the root of all sin.
2. “to know...whether you would keep His commandments or not”. To develop obedience as one's first and most natural reaction, to shape the heart.

Application: If you were to follow **ALL** of God's commands, how do you think you'd do in times of testing by God? Is it possible that pride still has a foothold and your heart is not entirely in the right place because of not obeying God's Word in some way?

Q: What is the deeper teaching provided in the revelation in v.3 that “He humbled you and let you be hungry”?

A: God uses difficult circumstances to change us. He will allow temporary, earthly hardship in order to build eternal, spiritual character by ridding us of our dependence on earthly things.

Q: What do food and clothing represent as presented in v.3-4?

A: They represent the necessities of life, the things we absolutely need.

Q: But what is the greater lesson God teaches when it comes to the necessities of life?

A: We have a greater need to be properly fed and clothed spiritually. He may need to teach us not to desire such things in excess according to our earthly desires, but to allow them to be provided according to His greater plan and desire.

Point: Throughout Scripture, eating is associated closely with consuming God's Word, a teaching that just as physical food is an absolute requirement to sustain physical life, spiritual food is so required. God's Word comprises all of the basic necessities of life—both for this life and the one to come.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

John 6:48-51

[Read v.6-10]

Q: According to v.6, what are the 2 things that we need to do that will result in keeping His commandments?

1. "walk in His ways" – To walk according to His path, and His path alone.
2. "fear Him" – To regard God's feelings and concerns above all others.

Q: How are v.6-10 a striking contrast to those of v.1-5? What's the main topic they share but expound upon quite differently?

A: The commonality is food or the basic necessities of life. The chief contrast is "hunger" in v.1-5 and "plenty" in v.6-10. Whereas one's focus was taken off of earthly food in order to see the need for spiritual, now the plentiful earthly supply is to be properly rendered as equal to God's spiritual blessings. They must **BOTH** be viewed in the proper context by the Believer.

Application: How well do you recognize that it's just as important to focus on God in times of plenty as in times of need? Does obedience to **ALL** of God's Law sometimes slip in times of physical prosperity? What should you do to honor and obey God under **ALL** circumstances, particularly during the "good" times?

[Read v.11-17]

Q: According to v.11, how does one "forget the Lord"?

A: "...by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes".

Q: What is the concern here expressed that may happen once a person's needs are taken care of? What is the deeper teaching?

A: That because their physical needs are now more than sufficiently met, they will not see the need to also keep up with their spiritual needs and allow them to deteriorate.

Q: How does the result expressed in v.14 compare with that in v.2? How are they related?

A: In v.2 it's explained that one of the chief purposes of obedience to God's Word is to make one humble, to be rid of pride. Here we see that pride returns as a result of slipping back into disobedience.

Q: What is the result of pride?

A: According to v.17, pride is evident in our forgetting God's role in shaping and leading our life and allowing ourselves to embrace the false belief that we've accomplished everything on our own. It defeats the purpose of the cycle God has taken us through.

⁶"Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. ⁷For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

¹¹"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; ¹²otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, ¹³and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, ¹⁴then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹⁵He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. ¹⁶In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. ¹⁷Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.'

Application: How do you honestly view all that lies within your personal possession right now? Is it possible that at least one of the personal struggles in your life is rooted in the belief that something has come about by your own strength and power instead of God's? Is it possible that in times of things going well that your thoughts and life no longer give God the same priority as during times of great need?

¹⁸“But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. ¹⁹It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. ²⁰Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.

[Read v.18-20]

Q: So what is the ACTUAL purpose of God's provision for us personally?

A: According to v.18, “that He may confirm His covenant”. In other words, they are to be a visible testimony of our obedience and commitment to Him.

Application: Have you ever thought of the way you deal with physical needs as a testimony of your walk in Christ? How would this serve as a testimony of both the quality of your personal sanctification and your witness to others?

Q: How might v.19-20 be applied to us today?

A: It's a teaching about backsliding into the ways of the old life, that disobedience takes us right back to the place we were before Christ.

Q: In v.20 it's basically stated that disobedience is the result of not listening “to the voice of the Lord your God”. What does this teach us about the biblical definition of what it means “to listen”?

A: Biblically speaking, the only evidence that someone has listened is if they put the things they heard into actual practice. The only proof that we have “listened” is the degree to which we obey and put it into practice.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:23-25