

The unfolding of your words gives light.

Power to Make Wealth

Deuteronomy 8

It is worthwhile to note that the word "commandments" in the first verse of Deuteronomy 8, often translated as a plural, is actually singular. Moses may have been speaking of "each commandment" or he may have meant to picture the law of God in its unified fullness as if there were only one command.

Moses listed all the benefits God supplied in the wilderness (verses 3-4) and then told them what he would supply once they arrived in Canaan (verses 7-9). In the wilderness he let them get hungry, but he fed them with manna. He allowed their clothing to last. He saved them from physical impairments like swollen feet so they could continue their journey. While Moses did not get to go into the promised land, he said that God would supply plenty of water, abundant crops and produce, and natural resources like iron and copper mines.

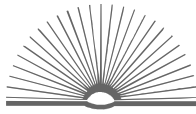
Verse 10 calls the people to respond to the provision of God. It says, "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you." Our necessary habit of blessing the Lord at meals comes from this command.

The warning Moses gives here is against everything that makes us think we are self-sufficient. God allowed Israel to become hungry in the wilderness and then brought them food because he wanted them to recognize their utter dependence on him. That humble dependency was meant to carry on into the Promised Land. The man who works 60 hours a week in a factory so he can pay for his own food should not look down on the man standing in line at the soup kitchen with a bowl in his hands. One is being given a meal. The other is being given strength to work so he can have a meal.

We would do well to learn a lesson here about the way God provides for us. You may have heard the parable of the man whose house was surrounded by the waters of a rising flood. His neighbors offered him the use of their truck to get him and his necessities to a safer location. He politely declined saying, "God will take care of me." The floodwaters moved into his home, forcing him to retreat to the roof. Two men in a small motorboat came to his rescue, but still he determined to stay put saying, "God is going to take care of me." Eventually all that could be seen of the man's house was his chimney, with the man perched precariously atop. A helicopter dropped a ladder and a man with a bullhorn yelled "Grab the ladder!" Stubbornly, the homeowner waved them on with his statement of faith. The final scene of the parable shows the man standing before God wondering why his faith was not rewarded with the care he expected. God said, "I sent you a truck, a boat and a helicopter. What more did you want?"

The lesson is this: Every good gift is from God, whether or not he uses human means. This is why humility is the order of the day. God can still give you bread on the ground, but it's okay to bake bread if you have the ingredients. God can still bring immediate healing when we pray, but he can also use the skill of a doctor. God can still part the Red Sea, but it is not faithless to build bridges. God can take care of widows with small children, but you should still buy life insurance.

The Lord Jesus used this text to combat the attacks of the devil. After the Master had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, the tempter said, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3). The Lord responded by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. The way our Savior understood the Deuteronomy text is the



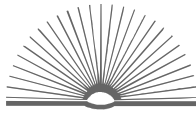
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way we should understand it. There is nothing wrong with eating, but there are some things more important than eating.

The truth of Deuteronomy Chapter 8 is summarized by this statement: "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." Consider some of the ways this chapter profoundly affects the way followers of the living God view life:

1. It brings you joy in hard times. Moses told the people that God was behind their hard times with a loving purpose. He said (8:2), "You 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." As Job learned, trials are the devil's way to bring people to sin, but God's way to bring people to maturity. As Job said (Job 23:10), "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."
2. It makes you strong in the face of temptation. When we are tempted to sin, we are tempted to find satisfaction or pleasure in something other than God. Moses said (8:3), "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your father's 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." The Lord Jesus reached back to quote this when the devil tempted him to turn stones to bread after a prolonged period of fasting (Matthew 4:4).
3. It assures you that you are God's child. God's provision and his discipline demonstrate which children belong to him. Moses said (8:4-5), "Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these 40 years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son." God not in the process of molding, humbling and disciplining the neighbor kids. He is in the process of making his children look like his Son (Romans 8:29). As the writer of Hebrews says, "Is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Hebrews 12:7-8).
4. It makes you thankful. Moses said, "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you" (8:10). Paul revealed the heart of idolatry in Romans 1:21. He pointed out that God has made himself clearly seen, but man has chosen to reject him. He writes, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Through trials or prosperity, God is making himself known. The correct response is thanksgiving. This is why we bless the Lord (not the food) when we sit down to a meal.
5. It warns you of the dangers of loving money. Prosperity can make us deaf to the voice of God. As Moses warned the people (8:13-14), "... and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, and 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." Self-sufficiency, not riches, bars men from the kingdom of heaven. In the parable of the rich fool, the problem was the heart revealed by this statement, "Soul, you

A message by Steven L. Svendsen, Sr.
Rice Lake Baptist Church



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- have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19).
6. It humbles you when you look at what you possess. Moses reminded the people of their daily bread in the wilderness (8:16), "In 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." There are no "self-made men." Paul said (1 Corinthians 4:7) "What do you have that you did not receive?"
 7. It motivates you to share. Nothing you have really belongs to you. Moses said (8:18), "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." The Church of Acts 4 shared their property in common. Acts 4:32 says that "not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own." This did not spring from a human government taking from the haves and giving to the have-nots. It sprung from hearts that recognized the owner of all wealth.
 8. It makes you content with what you have. Moses warned the people of the consequences of thinking other gods could bring more satisfaction. He said, "It 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" (8:19). What you have right now is enough. The apostle told the Philippians (4:12-13), "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

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