

# Deuteronomy 8:1-20

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're in Deuteronomy 8, if you want to turn there, it's page 152 in your Bibles. On Thursday morning, I drove to church, I arrived at 3 minutes to 8 in time for the session prayer!

I then had to get ready for Christianity Explored at lunchtime on Thursday, and at 12 o'clock as I was packing my bags to get to the town hall for Christianity Explored, I thought, I forgot the parking permit.

So I went to my car with trepidation, and sure enough, there was the big yellow penalty sticker on the windscreen. All I had to do at 8 o'clock was go and get the parking permit from the office, which is free, didn't cost me anything, I just had to appropriate it, put it in my windscreen, and leave it there.

But I didn't, and I paid the price. That was the one shock of the morning, actually, discovering that parking tickets are no longer £80, but £110. £55 if you pay it immediately, which I did.

But a costly error. How's your memory? I hope it's better than mine was. I hope it's better than mine was. But isn't it true that the biggest danger in the Christian life is not that tomorrow morning we'll wake up and think, this is not true, or that next week we'll decide, actually, we want to be Buddhist, or we want to be Muslim.

[ 1 : 38 ] The biggest danger, surely, is that we simply forget. We simply forget. Peter, at the end of his life, in 2 Peter chapter 1, writing his final letter, says this, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and establish in the truth you have, I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder.

What was the problem Peter was countering? Believers forgetting. What did the Lord Jesus say to his disciples as he broke bread and gave them wine at that Passover meal on the night he was betrayed?

Do this in remembrance of me. The danger we face is that we'll forget. We'll forget. And that's the danger Moses knows the people face.

As they're about to head into the promised land, he is going to die shortly. They're going to go into the promised land without him. And he does not want them to forget. He wants them to remember that the Lord is their life giver.

The Lord is our life giver. And so he must always remember his work for us. If you look down at chapter 8, you'll see that remembering is at the heart of it. Look at verse 2. You shall remember the whole way the Lord your God brought you.

[ 2 : 57 ] Look at verse 18. You shall remember the Lord your God. For it is he who gives you power. And the command comes again and again. Don't forget. So verse 11.

Take care lest you forget. Verse 14. Then your heart be lifted up and you forget. Verse 17 continues it. Beware lest you save because you forget.

See forgetting is the great danger. So we need to look at the work the Lord has done for us that we need to remember. There are three aspects to that work we see here in this passage. In verses 1 to 10 we see the Lord's discipline for our instruction.

That's part of the Lord's work for us. He disciplines us for our instruction. Look at verse 1. Or verse 2 rather. You shall remember the whole way the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness.

That he might humble you. Testing you to know what is in your heart. Whether you can keep his commandments or not. Israel was not to forget the times they'd been through.

[ 4 : 05 ] They'd been on the Lord's boot camp as it were. A time for their instruction. To discipline them. That they might know the truth. The Lord disciplines us to teach us. And here we see the first thing he's going to teach us.

There are three things he teaches us in his discipline. The first thing is to know our own hearts. He does it to know our hearts. Because as the omniscient Lord he already knows our hearts. So the discipline, the hard times, the times of testing. So that we can discover for ourselves what is in our hearts. I don't know about you. I can often think I'm actually quite a patient, decent person. But then I wake up on a Sunday morning and I need to get my kids ready to go to church. Or we drive out the house as happened this morning. And a large truck drives around the corner. Obviously assuming no one else would be on the road on a Sunday morning. And my instant reaction is not one of patience and godliness. But what are you doing? See even in these little things. It tests us and shows our hearts, doesn't it?

[ 5 : 07 ] It shows our hearts. We might like to think we're quite godly, patient people. We might like to excuse ourselves by saying we're tired, we're under pressure, we're busy. It's Sunday morning, I'm preaching.

But actually these circumstances show what's on our hearts. And what does the Lord Jesus say? Matthew 11. It's out of our, Matthew 15 rather. What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. See, hard times can test our hearts, can't they? The Lord wants us to know our hearts. It's humbling to know our hearts, isn't it?

It's humbling to realise that out of our heart is coming such things. What does that do for us? It should send us back to the Lord for his mercy and forgiveness, shouldn't it? And so when tough times come, whether they're little tough times, like the potential of being late for church, or the big tough times.

[ 6 : 12 ] A child in hospital. A bad diagnosis. It shows our hearts. It sends us back to the Lord. If you would ask me two years ago today, what I would be doing in two years' time.

There are all sorts of answers I might have given you. Being here probably would not be one of those answers. It took being humbled. Six weeks in hospital with a brain infection. Needing to learn to walk again. Needing to learn what year it was. Needing to learn who I was again. For the Lord to teach me some things. And I praise him for that. He humbles us. So that we might know our own hearts. And that brings us back to him. So he disciplines us for our own good. Firstly, so we know our own hearts. But secondly, so we know what we really need.

You see that in verse 3. Look at verse 3. How he humbled you. And let you hunger. In our consumer culture, we don't like having needs, do we?

[ 7 : 16 ] But this is our God. He will let us hunger. Why? He let us hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone.

But man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Literally, that man lives by everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord. He made Israel hunger. So they might know their greatest need was not for bread to sustain them. But for the word of God that sustains us. He will let us hunger. He will let our dreams fade. He will let our desires go unmet. Why? Because he loves us and disciplines us for our good. So let me discover what we really need.

What we really need is what comes from his mouth. Every word that comes from his mouth. It's through his word, through his mouth that he reveals himself to us. He makes promises.

[ 8 : 17 ] He reveals the grace that is only available in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's from his mouth that comes his commands of what are good for us and right for us and true. His promises, his purposes, his grace.

All of this revealed by his word. And that is what we really need. More than comfort. More than food. More than anything else. So we shouldn't be surprised when our desires go unfulfilled. We shouldn't be surprised when hard times come. It's not because God does not love us. But it's because in love he is pursuing us so we can see what we really need. And what we really need is what comes from him. And if we have any doubts about that, think about the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. Matthew 4, being tempted. Who was fasted and hungry. What does the tempter say to him? Matthew 4 verse 3. The tempter came and said to him, If you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of

bread.

[ 9 : 18 ] But Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Now does that ever surprise you?

What harm would it have done for Jesus, being hungry, to just turn some rocks into bread and have something to eat? Would that have damaged the plan of salvation? It might not seem obvious to us, but Jesus' answer is, Yes, it would do.

Because Jesus, as part of submitting to the Father's plan, was limiting himself to his human nature, not just using his divine power for his own benefit, but to just totally obey the word of his Father.

To totally submit to the word of God. And so he was living, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He was trusting his Father's revealed plan, limiting himself to that.

And it's not by coincidence that Jesus was 40 days in the desert, just as Israel had been 40 years in the wilderness. It's not by coincidence that Jesus hungered in the desert, just as Israel had hungered in the wilderness.

[ 10 : 30 ] But where Israel had grumbled and failed, Jesus succeeds and overcomes the temptation by remembering the word of God, by quoting Deuteronomy 8, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Now if Jesus lived his life on earth, dependent on the word of his Father, do we need God's word any less? Do we need it any less?

Of course not. And yet, do our lives reflect a dependency on God's word? Do our lives reflect that we really are urgent about the business of listening to you, of taking in God's word, of feeding on it, more than feeding on bread even?

Is it a priority in our lives to listen to God's word? Does God's word inform and form the way we think about our world, the way we think about our ambitions, our desires, our hopes, our longings, our prayers?

The Lord disciplines us so we know our own hearts, and so we know our need for his word, so we know that our need is for what he says, not what the world says.

[ 11 : 48 ] There's a third thing he wants us to learn from his discipline. Look at verse 5. Know then in your heart, that as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.

Imagine if a parent never disciplined a child, or maybe you've seen some children, you think, they've never been disciplined. Would it be loving for father and mother to never discipline their child?

Of course not, it wouldn't be. Did you notice the goal of this discipline that the Lord has for us? Verse 6. Know all this. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and fearing him.

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land. That's where the Lord's taking us. Look down to verse 16. Moses reminded them, The Lord fed you in the wilderness with manna your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end.

This discipline is for our good, because he's a loving father. He wants us to see where he's taking us. Going back to verse 7, he's taking us into a good land. It's a beautiful description in verses 7-10.

[ 13 : 00 ] Pick up in verse 8. It's a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates. A land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing.

A land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he's given you. See, he disciplines us as a father for our good, because he loves us.

Because he has good things for us. And that beautiful land he promised Israel is just a foretaste of the beautiful new creation, where we will bless our God forever, in a perfect world, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, where our fellowship with him is complete, where we see him face to face, when his name is on our foreheads.

That is the plan he has for us. He disciplines us, as Hebrews 12 puts it, so that we may share in his holiness. He disciplines us because he loves us.

See, when life is hard, we can complain, we can grumble, we can despair. As the psalm shows, some of those responses are legitimate and okay.

[ 14 : 13 ] But ultimately hard times come, because our father loves us, and he disciplines us for our good. So our response should be to work through the morning, when work is tough, when there are

difficult people in our lives, to work through that, and to pray, to pray that the pain will not be wasted, but that our father in his mercy will straighten us out, discipline us, teach us, instruct us, that ultimately he might do us good.

We can share in his holiness. So here's the first thing the Lord, that Moses wants us to remember. Moses wants Israel to remember. He wants to remember the Lord disciplines us for our good.

For our good. Now secondly, here goes to verses 11 to 17, Moses wants us to remember that the Lord has rescued us for our blessing. He's rescued us for our blessing.

We saw that picture there, the great land the Lord is bringing Israel into. The picture of the new creation he's bringing us into. The Lord has rescued us, rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He's rescued us from slavery to sin, through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's done what we could never achieve. We could never rescue ourselves. We could never earn our own forgiveness.

[15:26] We could never make ourselves right with God. But he's done all that for us, for our good, ultimately to bless us. And so he rescued Israel for their good.

And yet, there was a temptation, wasn't there? It was a temptation to forget. Moses spells out that temptation in three ways. Let's look at them.

The first temptation to forget comes in verse 11. Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and statutes which I command you today.

And you think, what could induce Israel to forget? They'd been rescued from slavery. They'd come through the Red Sea. They'd been sustained 40 years in the wilderness.

How could they forget? Well, let me ask you this. What was your favourite Christmas present? Especially children. What was your favourite Christmas present? Can you remember how excited you were when you opened it up?

[16:23] Do you remember how thankful you felt at the time? Now, we're the 25th of January today. A month later, do you still feel so grateful?

Or are you just used to using that toy? Used to reading that book or whatever that present was?

One of my wise professors once told me, gratitude is the first emotion to evaporate.

Gratitude is the first emotion to evaporate. So that's how Israel could forget. They could just get on with life and gratitude just evaporates.

It's like those Christmas presents. We're no longer as thankful as we were a month ago. So the safeguard of forgetting is first of all being thankful. That's why the New Testament is crowned full with commands for thanksgiving, prayers of thanksgiving.

So we don't forget through just complacency and ingratitude. But the second reason we can forget sometimes that's in verse 12. That's circumstances can lead us to forget.

[17:28] So Moses says, lest when you've eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart is lifted up and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness.

See, Moses can see the day when suddenly they can eat all they want, suddenly they're getting all the blessings God had promised them and life's comfortable and then they just forget.

And isn't it true for us? When do we pray more? Is it when we've got a job interview coming up or when we need to get a new job? Or is it three months after the new job started and we're feeling at home and settled?

Is it before the exam we're nervous and worried? Or is it after the exam we've passed and can forget it all? Someone was telling me the other day about some friends of theirs who, when their baby was born, a child was very, very ill.

The church they were in gathered around them and provided for them and prayed for them. And the doctors said it was a miracle that this child survived. Fifteen years later, after that great miracle in their lives, how's that family doing?

[18:53] They're no longer following the Lord. No longer walking in His ways. We so easily forget. And material comfort can lead us to forget, can't it?

Living in a world with smartphones, internet access everywhere, nice comfortable cars, we can forget where we've come from. We can forget that we're naturally destined to hell, we're naturally objects of God's wrath, and that nothing of our own goodness, nothing of our own worthiness could

save us.

It's the Lord God who has led us, the Lord God who has provided for us, the Lord God who is our good shepherd, who leads us every way, every step of the way, whose rod and scar comforts us. Let's not get hoodwinked by material prosperity.

Let us not forget. So we can forget through gratitude and complacency, we can forget through comfort, but also we can forget, thirdly, through proud self-reliance.

Look at verse 17. Beware, lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hands have gained me this wealth.

[ 20 : 04 ] That's a danger for all of us, isn't it? Not just material wealth, but in a church like this. We can look at our ministries and they're like, that's great, we've got people coming to Christianity at the store on Thursday lunchtime, it's great, we've got all these kids coming to the club, look what we're doing, aren't we doing well?

By God's grace, there is fruit here, by God's grace, there's so much to be thankful for. But that does not come because of us, but because of him. We must not be proud in our hearts.

Yet one of the great challenges we have as a congregation now is the redevelopment project. Right now, as we look at the huge sum of money that has to be raised to redevelop our building now in Drayton Green, it makes us pray, doesn't it?

How on earth can we get several million pounds to do this? We do not know. We need to pray. But fast forward five years, and if God permits, we may then have a new building there.

And then what would we be like? As people stream into a comfortable building, as we have nice rooms to meet now at Sunday school, where people no longer have to come to Drayton Manor to set out the teas and coffees and get the PA rigged up and all the rest of it.

[ 21 : 19 ] What will we think? Wow. Look at this great building we've got. Aren't we clever? Just yesterday, I was back in Richmond visiting my old church, and we lived through a redevelopment project.

And it's a beautiful, smart building now, used by many people. But the temptation is to think. I'm not saying anyone there thinks that, but it's a temptation. Look what we've got.

Why? As it all comes from God. We can forget because of success and proud self-reliance. We can forget because of comfort. We can forget because of ingratitude.

See, we need to remember. As verse 18 puts it, you shall remember remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you power to get wealth. See, success is a dangerous thing.

That's why Moses is standing there imploring people, remember the Lord's work for you.

Remember his discipline to instruct you for your good. Remember he rescued you from slavery in Egypt and brought you out for blessing for your good.

[ 22 : 22 ] Remember thirdly, the Lord keeps his covenant whatever. The Lord keeps his covenant whatever happens. Look at verses 18 and 19. You shall remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you power to get wealth that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers as it is this day.

Now a covenant, there are two sides of a covenant. So a covenant is a relationship established by God. It's God's initiative, it's entirely from him. He comes and says, this is the deal. You can be my people.

This is what he said to Israel in the Old Testament. You will be my people and I will be your God. And if you keep my commands and rules, I will bless you. And you'll have all the good things I've promised you.

But if you do not keep them, you will get the curses. And so the covenants work. God's instigation, then God's people can respond either with faith that is demonstrated in obedience and get the blessing that has promised or with unbelief that is demonstrated in disobedience that leads to the curse.

And that's what's happening here. Look at verse 19. So they'll get the power and the wealth as the Lord confirms the covenant, verse 18. If they believe and obey, then verse 19, if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, if you break the very basic command of this covenant, then I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

[ 23 : 55 ] Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God. So the Lord is going to keep his covenant.

He's going to confirm the covenant. You can respond in faith and obedience, Israel, in which case you will be confirmed in it and you'll have the blessings and you'll have life in the land. Or you can respond in unbelief and disobedience by forgetting and chasing after the other gods of the world around you and then you will get what they got.

You will perish. Now how does that work out for us today? We're not Israel. We live after the Lord Jesus Christ. But the same dynamic is still at work.

Galatians 3.13 tells us that Christ became the curse for us on the cross. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

For it is written cursed is everyone who is hanging on the tree. So here is the glorious new covenant. Christ has taken the curse. Christ Jesus dying on the cross paid for our sin paid for our rebellion paid for the fact we cannot keep the law of God perfectly.

[ 25 : 06 ] But how do we respond to that offer? How do we respond to that covenant? For either in faith demonstrated by obedience or in unbelief demonstrated by disobedience.

So either we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we trust him alone as our saviour for there is no other name given under heaven or on earth by which man may be saved. So either we trust that it's only through Jesus that we can be forgiven in which case we'll remember day by day that it's through him we've been rescued from our slavery to sin rescued from our helplessness as those who cannot live the lives we want to live let alone the lives God wants us to live.

If we have faith in him by his pours his spirit into our lives and so our faith is shown in renewed life in obedience not a perfect obedience but a sincere spirit enabled obedience and then our curse is taken away and we are forgiven we can be in the promised land forever with a living God in a new creation the alternative is we forget we forget we follow after the gods of this world money pleasure the gods of other religions Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam then what's left?

at the final judgment we will perish as they perish that's what verses 19 and 20 tells us the question that faces us is where do our loyalties lie?

Who are we trusting in? Who are we remembering? So the Lord will confirm his covenant either with blessing for those who cling to the Lord Jesus or with destruction for those who turn away or those who rebel when I forgot to get the free parking permit from the church office it cost me I pay it quickly so it's only 55 pounds all I had to do was go get that thing trust that it would work put it on my windscreen I'd be fine for I forgot he paid the price how dare we forget the Lord who has loved us who pitied us when enemies he brought us for our slavery and has made us his let's not forget the Lord's work for us he disciplines us for our instruction he's rescued us for our good he will keep his covenant for blessing or for curse so let's keep trusting in

[ 27 : 51 ] Jesus let's pray together