

Forgetfulness

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

I admit freely that I sometimes forget things. There are times when that actually is of great advantage to me, because I tend rather automatically to forget hard things, difficult things. I'm thankful because there are some memories that would haunt me, if they remained in my conscious memory. They would grieve me. Even torment me. I'm thankful that I don't have bad memories that plague me as nightmares, because I know a number people who struggle with that very burden, memories they long to be free from, but can't.

So forgetfulness can be a good thing. But it can also be a bad thing. I have always appreciated the benefit of the fact that my wife's birthday is one week after Valentine's Day and our anniversary is two weeks after Valentine's Day. So as long as I am aware of Valentine's Day, I am conscious of those other two days. Thankfully, I'm not really prone to forgetting important dates anyway, but I know that can become quite a serious problem in some relationships.

On the other hand, I will never forget the day several years ago when I had scheduled an appointment on a Monday morning to visit a very respectable and respected family in my church, an older couple, and I just forgot. I never showed up. I stood them up. It was days before I realized what I had done, though this couple was too gracious to remind me themselves. So I just called them very apologetically. Understandable, maybe, but not good... It's not good to be forgetful.

That's our subject this morning, forgetfulness. And specifically, forgetfulness with relation to God. Now, strictly speaking, few people will actually forget God, like they might

forget their wife's birthday or a scheduled appointment.

Forgetfulness relative to God has something of a symbolic meaning. Sort of a practical forgetfulness. Not necessarily a memory lapse, but practically the same thing. You don't really forget that God exists, but you forget to honor and serve him, you forget to acknowledge him in your life and you go about your life as if he didn't exist. That's what it means to forget God. You act as if you have forgotten him. And there is one particular, tangible way to identify and define that forgetfulness. Disobedience.

I. DISOBEDIENCE EQUALS FORGETFULNESS.

v.11

Remember the context, that I mention every week. The people of God in Israel are about to cross over the Jordan River and take possession of their promised land. The land God had promised them. He had delivered them out of the land of slavery in Egypt, and they were on the brink of gaining their marvelous inheritance. It was a good time to be a citizen of the nation of Israel.

So what is the warning they receive from the Lord through his prophet Moses? Don't forget me. Specifically, don't forget me by being disobedient to me. And it is a warning. Beware!

v.11

I believe that there is implied in those words a sense of carelessness. And to be sure,

A. Carelessness breeds disobedience.

That's really the warning. Beware, that in your own carelessness, you won't remain diligent in your obedience. Surely, every one of you can identify with that warning, can't you? I can. It's easy to be careless. It's easy to be lazy. To be thoughtless. Negligent. Sloppy.

Seldom, I hope, do you simply go out and deliberately and intentionally sin by disobeying God. Seldom, I hope is your sin premeditated. You have your guard up. Your conscience is operative. But how easy it is to slip into disobedience. “It just happens,” is the common expression. You didn’t set out to disobey God, it just happened. And that’s the reason for the warning here.

v.11

There is something else here that is often the cause of our disobedience,

B. Prosperity breeds disobedience.

Interesting, isn’t it, that when things are going well, we are often the most prone to being careless. When things are going well, it is often the easiest time to be careless in regard to your obedience before the Lord. Because we act as if we don’t need God, because things are going well! So we read,

v.12-14

You see the problem, don’t you? I have everything I need or want. I have eaten. I am full. I have a nice house. I have a lot of flocks and herd, I have silver and gold, all the money I need. I am satisfied, because all is well. Those are the times when we can become blind to danger, the danger of forgetting the Lord, the danger of disregarding, disobeying the Lord. Because you think, wrongly of course, but you still think that you have everything under control. You have everything all planned out. And it’s working out just fine.

Strangely enough, that’s a very dangerous place to be, because in your own experience, it seems like you don’t really need God.

In that context, remember what we studied last week,
v.2-3

So hardship and testing is good. And prosperity is dangerous. That doesn’t seem right, does it? But that’s the point. That’s the warning. Carelessness and prosperity. And the passage ends with a warning about,

C. The dangers of disobedience.

Severe dangers, to be sure,
v.19-20

That’s the ultimate judgment, of course, the end result of a long and established pattern of disobedience. Not simply straying from the Lord a bit in carelessness, not just forgetting the Lord in a marginal or temporary way, but turning away from God unto other gods. Rejecting and rebelling against the one true God, totally and completely. That’s the warning about taking the first step in that direction. The first step can lead to the second step, then the third step. And this forgetfulness ultimately becomes a total and complete turning away from the Lord. One that will bring God’s judgment.

So beware. Be warned. Disobedience equals forgetfulness. And secondly,

II. PRIDE EQUALS FORGETFULNESS.

Not just being careless, but being puffed up. Full of a sense of your own importance. And verse 13 leads into verse 14. The danger of prosperity in verse 13 brings about the danger of pride in verse 14.

A. Pride is an ever-present danger.

v.14

That’s what prosperity often does. Not just carelessness, but

a sense of “look at me!” “Look at what I have accomplished.”
“When your heart is lifted up.”

I hate pride. I hate everything about pride. I hate what it does to other people. I hate what other people do to me when pride inhabits their heart. This truly is a deadly sin. And it must always be in the crosshairs of our aim when we set about putting sin to death.

Prov. 16:5 “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.”

Prov. 6:16 “These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.”

James 4:6 “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:5 “ Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Beware, people of God, the sinister and persistent dangers of pride. Beware this danger with the realization that it is ever-present. The roots of pride lie in our own hearts, often deeply embedded and very depth of our heart. So beware the pride that comes with prosperity and self-satisfaction.

v.11-14

Pride shows itself, in your own display of arrogance. It shows

itself in your demeanor, your self-confidence, your boasting.

B. Pride is an ever-present boast.

v.17

That’s awful, isn’t it? God blesses you. God prospers you. God gives you the desires of your heart and then some. God gives you good things, and blessings you with prosperity. And do you do? What do we do?

We start thinking to ourselves, “I did that...” Just look at me. Look at what I have accomplished. Look what I can do. Look at how important I am. That’s the danger. And that’s the warning. It is the warning against ever even just beginning to think to yourself, “My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.”

No, beloved. No it didn’t!

Maybe you were faithful. Good. Maybe you were wise. Good. Maybe you were diligent. Good. Praise God. But God always brings the increase. God always brings the fruit. God always brings the reward and the wages.

Whatever you have, God gave it to you. Whatever you have earned, whatever you have achieved, God enabled you to do. And we dare not ever get very far away from that marvelous thought. “My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.” No, it didn’t. God did.

James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

That’s the sort of humility that keeps you from forgetting God. That’s the sort of humility that keeps you from being careless.

Everything I have, everything I am, is gift and blessing of God. Period. And with that, let me then emphasize on the positive side,

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING.

Not just important dates like birthdays and anniversaries. Not just appointments or obligations. Not just details or something you're trying to memorize. But here it is the importance of remembering that which is the most central and the most important aspect and element of all of life.

A. Remember what the Lord has done in your salvation.

And this call to remembrance comes right out of the dangers of boasting. When your heart is tempted by pride, when your heart is puffed up with a sense of your own importance, when you are satisfied in your own prosperity, that's when you need to be reminded that it is by the sovereign grace of God that you are what you are, and you have what you have.

Remembering what the Lord has done is, of course, the realization that you have done nothing. It's what Paul testifies of himself in,

Phil. 3:7 "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count

myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

So rather than forgetting God in the midst of prosperity, remember instead, what the Lord has done for you. And all of a sudden we are all on the same page. We are all at the same level. We are all recipients of God's grace. Nothing more. Nothing less, to be sure. But nothing more!

So remember, as Moses makes reference to the great works of God in our redemption.

v.14

That was their deliverance, their salvation. They were redeemed out of the land of slavery. Then,

v.15-16

God provided for them. God gave them the bread of life. And don't fail to connect that to what it represents in terms of your life today. Jesus makes that connection just as plainly as he possibly could.

John 6:32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." 35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the

will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Jesus continues,

John 6:48 “I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”⁵² The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”

Then it’s even more clear,

John 6:53 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

So don’t ever forget what the Lord has done for you in your salvation, you who believe in Jesus. Don’t ever forget your life is found in Jesus, just as your physical life is found in the bread and other food you eat with your body. So Jesus refers to himself, and says, “He who eats this bread will live forever.” That’s what

we celebrate in the Lord’s Supper every week, eating and drinking of the sacrament “in remembrance of me.” We proclaim the Lord’s death. We remember!

It is always good to have that memory. To retain that memory. To dwell upon that memory. When it comes to your salvation, God did it. God saved you.

Titus 3:4 “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”

Eph. 2:4 “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

God did it. God saved you. It is not of works, lest anyone should boast. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Gal. 6:14 “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

And in that same context,

B. Remember what the Lord has done when you prosper.

Remember, don't forget. Don't act as if you have forgotten what the Lord has done.
v.17

No, beloved. NO. A thousand times no. Don't ever say that in your heart. Don't ever allow your heart to consider that thought for even a single second, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth."

1 Cor. 4:6 "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!"

So what do you have that you did not receive? I hope you immediately answer that question in your own mind. Nothing. You have nothing that you did not receive from God.

Remember what the Lord has done when you prosper.

And in your remembrance, in your remembrance that God has loved you in Jesus in order to give you eternal life, in that remembrance, go back to,

v.11 "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today."

The conclusion to this is well written in Paul's letter to Titus, Tit. 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."