

God adorns the humble with salvation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 April 2017

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. We're back in Deuteronomy chapter 8. You'll find that on page 152 in our Church Visitors Bibles.

And we're going to read the whole of Deuteronomy chapter 8. Moses says, To God's people, the whole commandment that I command you today, you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land the Lord swore to give to your fathers.

And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing, proving you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commands or not.

And he humbled you and let you 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, that man lives, as the footnote has it there, by all that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Your clothing didn't wear out on you and your foot did not swell these 40 years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.

[1 : 2 3] So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. Now this really ought to read like this.

When the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, of springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 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 land he has given you. Then take care. Lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commands and his rules and his statutes that I command you today.

Lest when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, as then your heart be 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 with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers didn't know, that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end.

Beware. Lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand has gotten me all this wealth. 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.

[3 : 2 3] And if you forget the Lord your God, and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Amen. May God bless to us this his word. Do turn with me, if you would, to Deuteronomy chapter 8, page 152, if you have a church Bible.

The Christian's greatest danger is not poison, but apple pie. I can't remember where I read that quote from John Piper, but I wrote it down and I've never forgotten it.

And in fact, it really sums up for us this chapter before us this morning. Because the danger for God's people in a fallen world and in a foreign culture is not just that of false tolerance and acceptance of idolatrous ways, as we saw last time in chapter 7, whether it's the idols of Moses' day in Canaan or whether it's the idols of the 21st century West today.

[4 : 47] No, it is the danger of forgetting God. And particularly of forgetfulness in the face of God's abundant blessing of us.

Perhaps the most dangerous thing that God can do for his church today is to bring it into a period of unremitting blessing. And certainly, I think the most dangerous thing he can do for your life is to make it overflow with material blessings.

Your work and your career and your marriage and family life and your possessions, even your Christian service. If that's what you're praying for, then beware because you may not know what you're asking.

Because in fact, the real sign that God is truly blessing you for his ultimate goal in your life, for ultimate glory, is that he is humbling you.

Perhaps very powerfully, perhaps very painfully. And according to Deuteronomy chapter 8, it is that humbling alone that teaches you to know him truly and to test and prove that you are truly his.

[5 : 57] And it's that humbling, however painful it is in the present, says verse 16, that humbling that will do you good in the end.

That is, it will fulfill God's ultimate purpose of grace for your life. Because God is a God who opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

He adorns the humble with salvation, says Psalm 149. And indeed, only the humble, that is those who are truly humbled by God, to know that all we have, including all in this earthly life, and all our hope for eternal life, that all we have comes only from him, only from the word of his mouth.

And so it's very important, vitally important indeed, that whether our times are ones of poverty or plenty, whether scarcity or great satisfaction, it's vitally important that we remember that we are a humbled people who depend utterly on the mouth of God for all things.

And that we never allow prosperity or pride to make us forget that. And forget him, forget the Lord, who alone is our life and our blessing and all our future hope.

[7 : 19] Look first at verses 1 to 6, because these verses focus on this real blessing of times of testing. Moses, just like Christ and his apostles, encourages us to understand the gracious discipline of scarcity and privation.

He calls us to remember the Lord in all the hard times of the past and to see that as then, all times of testing lead to ultimate blessing and good for God's people, if we will let them.

And so he says in verse 1 here, remain loyal to God and his covenant, the whole commandment of God, so that God's promised blessings will come to fruition as he swore to your fathers.

remembering verse 2 all the way that he led you in these wilderness years. Years of punishment, yes, for Israel's sin, but also of divine purpose.

Just as Joseph said, remember in Genesis chapter 50, what man purposed for evil, God purposed for good in his saving mercy. To test, to prove his people, to know their hearts.

[8 : 30] And verse 3, to teach them, to make them know the true God and his ways. To test them and to teach them.

Let's think of the second of those first. You see, God humbled them in the wilderness in order to teach them. Verse 3 says, he let them hunger and he fed them that he might make them know that man does not live by bread alone, but literally by all that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

In other words, not only is man utterly dependent on God for all his earthly needs and is God sufficient for all these material needs, but also to learn that life for man is much more than mere bread, than mere material things in this world.

Learning dependency on God and the sufficiency of God in all earthly life is very important. Of course, for the Israelites, they got up in the morning and they saw the manna on the ground and they literally knew God has decreed that we will live for another day.

They knew it was a daily decision of God to give them life and they were humbled by that utter dependence on him for food, for water, for the very breath of life. Like a baby, utterly dependent on his mother.

[9 : 50] All it can do is cry out and trust that that milk will come to them which gives them life. Well, it's a constant theme of scripture, isn't it, that it's just so for us.

We sang Psalm 124, if the Lord had not been for us, we would have been swallowed up by enemies. All our life is in his hands. But it's hard for us, isn't it, to really think like that most of the time.

Until, of course, perhaps you do get the diagnosis of a terminal illness and your life is ebbing away and you really do not know how many more days of living and breathing you have on this earth.

That's the way it seems to be, isn't it, for our friend David, the missionary in Japan and for his family at the moment ministering to him day by day. They do not know how many days of life God will give him.

But we don't think about that normally. Unless perhaps you're in a plane and you hit turbulence across mid-Atlantic or somebody takes ill seriously on a long-haul flight and very quickly you suddenly realize just how precarious your life really is.

[11 : 07] But God wants us to understand that. And sometimes it will take a wilderness experience, a time of real testing to teach us that dependence on him, that really does humble us.

Paul speaks of an experience like that when he was ministering in Ephesus, doesn't he? And he tells the church in Corinthians about it in 2 Corinthians 1. We were utterly burdened beyond our strength so that we despaired of life itself, he says.

Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. He really thought he was going to die. But that, he says, was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

A very hard experience it must have been without doubt. But what a blessing to learn that our life truly is moment by moment in the very hands of God.

Or literally, as verse 3 says here, according to the mouth of the Lord. It's not just his every word as in every word of the Bible, but everything he utters, every desire, every purpose, every command of his is directing the entire course of time and history.

[12 : 25] The whole universe is upheld by the word of his power, says Hebrews 1. And we live or die, we breathe according to his mouth, his very utterance.

In chapter 34 of Deuteronomy later on, we read the very same words where it says Moses in Moab, Moses died literally at the mouth of the Lord. That's a very humbling thing to come to terms with, isn't it?

To go home and go to bed tonight and think to yourself, whether I wake up again tomorrow is entirely by the mouth of the Lord, by his command. And we don't easily believe that, do we?

Apostle James writes about it. We talk about our plans for the future, to go to this place or that, to trade, to make a profit. Just what you're reading in the newspapers just now, isn't it?

Trade deals, Brexit and all the rest of it, this is what we'll do. But James says, you don't know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You're but a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

[13 : 30] Wouldn't that be a great verse to put on the door of every leader in society, every leader of the world, on the door of the Oval Office? How about that? And the Kremlin and 10 Downing Street and Butte House and the European Union and everywhere else.

What is your life? You're but a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. That's a humbling word. But not just for people like that, for us too.

That's who James is writing to. He speaks to us, believers in Christ and says, look, above all, you should be people who say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.

Not as a pious platitude, you know, putting DV at the end of everything you write. DV is Deo Volante, if the Lord wills, in Latin because things are more pious when you put them in Latin, aren't they?

But not pious platitudes like that, but rather remembering that we truly do depend wholly and completely on the sovereign God for everything, every breath we take, every move we make in life.

[14 : 34] We depend utterly on Him. But He is utterly sufficient for our every earthly need. That's what Israel learned in that wilderness school of discipleship.

And that's what we need to learn too. And if we haven't yet learned it, friends, then the Lord may have to lead us through a wilderness of our own in order to do so.

And if He does, don't resent that humbling experience. remember, it is the humble He adorns with salvation.

But the lesson for Israel, you see, and the lesson for us, is not only that God is sufficient for all of earthly life, but that God alone is sufficient. That's the deeper point here in verse 3.

Do you see? Life for mankind, he is saying, is not merely about bread. It's not merely about the material things of life. There's far, far more to human life than merely that.

[15 : 34] It's about all that the mouth of the Lord has uttered. And as Christopher Wright puts it, the words that promise bread came from the same mouth that promised much, much more. The mouth of God is what is spoken about His covenant promises, the blessings of His kingdom, of a future with Him, of joy in His presence forever.

Christopher Wright says again, all earthly life needs bread or its equivalent, abundant. But human life needs the mouth of God that first breathed into our nostrils.

For while bread keeps us physically alive, it's the word of God that uniquely gives human life its meaning, its shape, its purpose, its value. And God's people, you see, know that, don't we?

Not like the pagan world round about. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions, says Jesus. Life is more than food and the body is more than clothes.

Your heavenly father knows that you need these things, he will provide them. As he did for the Israelites, verse 4, look, their clothes didn't wear out, their feet didn't swell through malnutrition for 40 years, even in the desert.

[16 : 45] But it says, Jesus, seek first His kingdom that is His life everlasting. And all these merely earthly things, of course, they'll be added to you, everything you need, but don't fail to see beyond the mere food and clothes, mere material things.

It's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. That's what comes from the mouth of the Lord. You see, Jesus' message is the same as Moses.

And we need to hear His words. And we need to heed His example. Jesus quoted this very verse, didn't He, to the devil in the desert when he was tempted to major just on bread, on material things of this life.

But Jesus says, no. Life is about far more than just that. Derek Kidner says, Jesus' acceptance of verse 3 shows that it's not an irksome demand, but it's the very key to life itself.

Jesus was living the true life. My food, He said, is to do the will of Him who sent me. Do you remember in John chapter 4, where the disciples are fussing around, caring about nothing but their stomachs and their packed lunch and all the rest of it?

[18 : 00] No care about what Jesus is doing when hordes of Samaritans, including that poor needy woman, are rushing to Him and finding life everlasting, the living waters.

And the disciples are like grumpy Christians sitting in church, just thinking, when will that preacher stop so we can get home and have our lunch? And not caring about the person who has found Christ and who is drinking in every word and having their soul fed with the words of eternal life.

And you see, that is Moses' point here as well. Yes, God is sufficient for all our earthly needs. And of course, we can depend on Him, but much, much more than that. All His provision for us on earth is so that we will seek and find in Him so much more.

If you go back and read Exodus 16 about the manna, you'll see it plainly. God gave the manna, He said, so that Israel would know that the Lord is their Redeemer. So that they would see His glory.

So that they would know Him and love Him. So that they would grasp what Moses writes later on in Deuteronomy chapter 30 that the Lord, He is your life. That His words are your life.

[19 : 18] Just as Jesus said, I am the bread of life. My words are spirit and life. The Father's commandment is eternal life. To know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, that is eternal life.

That's true life. Jesus wants us to know what true life really is. And so does Moses. life in all its fullness. Life that is found only in knowing God truly.

He wants us to depend utterly on Him because He wants to be everything to us. And that's why as well as teaching us through these hard times, you see, this passage also tells us plainly that He is testing us, proving us, as He tested Israel, verse 2, to know what was in their hearts.

And so as to lead them to true wisdom, to true knowledge of Him. Just as any good father will discipline the son that he loves for their good, not for their harm. That's the point of verse 5, isn't it?

It reflects Proverbs 3, verse 11 and 12 where we're told not to despise the Lord's discipline. Why? Because the Lord reproves those He loves as a father, the son in whom He delights.

[20 : 30] God tests us because He loves us. Just as Jesus indeed was tested and learned obedience through His wilderness experience.

Not because Jesus was disobedient before that, but He learned through obedient trust in God what it means to be faithful to God so as to know life as it's meant to be.

Life lived in unbroken relationship with God. And He did that, says Hebrews chapter 5, for us. So that He could become the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

But you see, Jesus wants us to so share the fullness of His true life, the life that He imparts to us, that He imparts it to us in exactly the same way that He grasped it.

We also become perfect. We become mature and complete as we share in His path of earthly obedience, of humble trust in God our Father.

[21 : 36] Hebrews 12 tells us, doesn't it, that God is treating us like sons, just like Jesus. That He disciplines us for our good so that we may share in His holiness. And yes, it does often seem hard, deeply unpleasant at the time.

But in the end, says the Apostle, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness forever. And that's exactly, you see, what verse 16 says here.

Do you see, God humbles His people and tests His people to do them good in the end. That is, to fulfill in them His ultimate purpose and destiny for their lives of blessing and glory.

That phrase, in the end, is found often in the Old Testament and often it's translated as the future. And it means the future hope of those who trust in God.

And it's seeing that future hope in our lives that's so, so important. Remember Psalm 73 where the psalmist is so grieved and vexed and perplexed that a world where the wicked seem to prosper and the godly seem to suffer.

[22 : 47] And then at last he says, I went into your sanctuary and I beheld their end. Their end. They shall fall into ruin, he says.

Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You guide me with your counsel and afterward you'll receive me into glory. A very different end.

God is the strength of my heart, he says, my portion forever. Again, you'll find that all the way through the Proverbs. Just one example from Proverbs 24. The evil man, he says, has no future.

The lamp of the wicked will be put out. That's their end. But if you find wisdom through the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, there will be a future and your hope will never be cut off.

So do you see what a blessing it is to see even now the true blessing of times of testing and the gracious discipline of privation at the hand of God because it's for our good to work blessing in the end in a future of ultimate blessing.

[24 : 01] That's Paul's encouragement, isn't it, in Romans 8, 28, where he says, all things, and in the context there, it's all these things that vex us, all these trials of life in a fallen world, all these things that are so painful, but all these things work together for good to them that love God who are called according to his purpose, called according to his mouth, we might put it from this chapter.

It's all part of a road to glory which only those humbled by his grace can tread. Only those who have learned to depend utterly on his grace can walk that road and fight that road.

So that's why he says here in verse 6, don't give up on God by abandoning his ways and throwing off his lordship, his commands. Keep faith with him because you know that you depend on him for everything.

And don't curse God for times of scarcity, times of privation. Bless him. It's his gracious discipline for your good. He's driving you to trust him all the more.

And you can depend on him on his every promise and on his every provision. It's all, says the Apostle Peter, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, which is far more precious than gold, never mind bread, that your faith may result in praise and honor and glory at the end, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 32] So James says, count it all joy when you meet trials of all kinds, for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness do its work that you may be complete and perfect, lacking nothing.

Because blessed is the man who stands firm under trial. When he has stood the test, he will inherit the crown of life. You see, Moses, Peter, James, Jesus, they're all at one to encourage us to see and to embrace the real blessing of times of testing.

And many of us here in this church can testify personally to that in our own lives, can't we? And we can surely as a church fellowship as we remember all that God has brought us through, many dangers, toils and snares.

What a blessing as he has humbled us in receiving great, great things from his hand. Well, we need to remember that, don't we? All the way that he's humbled us.

And be humbled by that and never forget it. Because, you see, as well as real encouragement, as always, the Bible gives us real warnings.

[26 : 53] And that's what the rest of this chapter is all about from verse 7 to the end. It's about the real testing of times of blessing. You see, Moses, just like Jesus and his apostles, warns us to understand the grave danger of satisfaction and plenty.

And he calls God's people not to forget the Lord in the good times and the future. And to see God's blessings and gifts to us will always be things that will likewise test us and our loyalty to him.

Verse 7 really begins a very long sentence that comes to its climax in verse 11. And as I read it, I think it's better to use the word when at the beginning. It's the very same as chapter 6 verses 10 to 12.

You'll see that's translated just that way as well. And this is the force of it. What he's saying is when God brings you into a good land full of blessing and bounty and when you're satisfied with that plenty, verse 10, when you're blessing God for all his abundant gifts, then it is you must take care.

Verse 11, lest you forget your God. Because if you do that as the end, verse 19 and 20 conclude and tell us, if amid his extraordinary blessings you should turn away from him, then that will certainly not lead you to the joyful end, to the destiny that he wants for you.

[28 : 17] That will lead only to utter disaster. You shall surely perish, he says, just like the pagans. Because you see your disobedience and your lack of love and trust in God show that you don't love him and serve him.

In fact, you hate him. And that's a terrible, terrible thing to contemplate. Isn't it striking that Moses is telling us that the believer's greatest danger isn't poison, it's the apple pie.

It's not hardship and suffering, it's satisfaction and plenty that may destroy us. What is it that makes us forget God amid such blessings?

Well, Moses gives us two warnings, two bewares or take cares. The first is in verse 11. Beware the real danger of plenty from God just by itself. It's such irony, isn't it, that it's God's own blessing of us that can bring us such real danger.

It's the good land that he himself has given, verse 10. It's full of natural wealth and produce, copper, gold, silver, everything. But you see, the truth is that the danger of complacency in times of ease and affluence is far, far greater than we could ever think.

[29 : 36] We move so quickly, don't we, from a sense of privilege at gifts we've been given to a sense of entitlement. That's all around us. It's human nature. We see it all around us in the world today. Look at our own welfare state and NHS and all the rest of it.

Such a massive drain on the nation because what began as a great privilege to be gratefully respected, cherished, has so quickly become a right to be demanded constantly, never to be abused so comprehensively.

That's human nature. But that is how God sees us treating his gifts to us. We can thank him for his gifts, as verse 10 says, even as we continue to consume them ever more greedily.

But we can forget utterly his lordship over our lives. We can forget that we serve him, not that he's there just to serve us. God's purpose for his people is abundance.

It's plenty. It's not scarcity. It's sufficiency. It's even surplus. What does the psalmist say in Psalm 23? And the Lord is my shepherd. But I lack nothing. We shall not want.

[30 : 47] Our cup runs over. The problem is not with God's lack of generosity. The problem is with our lack of gratitude. As William Still has put it, the acquisitive desire soon takes the place of humble gratitude.

And we invoke the Almighty as a means to further our ends. And then even as one to be circumvented in achieving them. That's so true, isn't it? You recognize that in your heart?

I certainly recognize it in mine. And he goes on, a man who prospers in material things and yet does not lose contact with bedrock thankfulness to God is surely a phenomenon.

Well again, that is all too true. The Lord would bless his people, I believe, materially a lot more if we were able to handle it. But we aren't able to handle it.

And so he's merciful to us. Again, William Still says, it's not easy but possible, Jesus says, for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

[31 : 53] Perhaps it's even harder for one aspiring to be rich. He's the blindest. Because thankfulness looks back, not forward. And his greedy eyes are always a way out in front.

Little does he know that when he gets to where he wants to be, God will be there to meet him and require of him that which is past. That's a comment, I think, full of insight into the human heart, isn't it?

Because those seeking wealth, whether it be financial wealth or social wealth, professional advancement, career advancement, sporting, academic, whatever it is, even in ministry, that is a deeply driven person seeking great things for themselves.

I had my old Bible out, didn't I, last Sunday evening? And it reminded me of a verse that's underlined in that Bible. And it's from a card that an old lady gave to me just as I went off to university at the age of 18, a retired missionary, a lady called Mary Ingalls in Hollywood and Edinburgh.

And she sent me a card. And I think perhaps she knew what temptations might be there for me. Somebody perhaps with certain prospects and abilities. And it just had one verse on it.

[33 : 06] It was this from Jeremiah 45, verse 5. Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. Seekest thou great things for thyself?

Seek them not. And those words have been underlined also in my heart on many occasions when I've had to take them to heart again as a word from the Lord, a warning from the Lord.

And I don't know how many things they may have saved me from over the years. I thank God for that card and for that godly old lady. And I commend it as a word to you.

Especially if you're an ambitious young man or woman seeking fame and fortune in what lies ahead of you. Especially, especially if you're a young man seeking a ministry of the gospel.

And you see in that a name and a reputation. Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. And I would add to that verse Isaiah 42 verse 8.

[34 : 09] I am the Lord and my glory I will not give to another. See, when the Lord blesses you, friends, and especially when the Lord blesses and gifts you abundantly, beware.

Because his greatest gifts to you in your life may very well be proved to be your greatest danger in this life. Take care then, says Moses, lest you forget the Lord your God.

The real danger in plenty. And look at verses 14 to 17, you see, because there is real danger also in the pride that so often accompanies that.

In your heart being lifted up and filled with conceit. Beware, verse 17, thinking, I did it all. My power and the might of my hand has gotten me all of this.

Yes, God gave gifts. Yes, God gave opportunity, but I brought the added value. I brought the alpha through my hard work, through my study, through my brains, or my brawn, or for a church, through our solid maturity and our history, or our great strategy and our programs, or our great preaching and exposition, or our superior theology, because we're really reformed, you know, we are, whatever it is.

[35 : 32] But you forget, says the Lord, verse 18, look, it is the Lord alone who gives you all the power to do what you do. Every gift, every opportunity, every break you've had in your life, in your career, your family, your wealth, your ministry, whatever it is, everything comes from him.

And have you forgotten verse 3, that your very life and breath is by his decree alone, by the mouth of the Lord your God? You think you know what you've achieved, what you achieve in your life?

You have no clue. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, says the Lord, so are my thoughts compared to yours.

And it is my word that goes out of my mouth. that accomplishes all things that I purpose. Isaiah 55. And you see, friends, if we dare to think like that, Moses says we're heading for utter disaster unless that pride is humbled in us.

For us is the Lord Jesus Christ, whoever exalts himself will be humbled in a terrible, humbling judgment that is to come. And on that day he says, only those who have humbled themselves before God will be able to be exalted by him.

[37 : 03] So beware lest the pride of a heart lifted up by the very blessings of God himself, lest that should lead you to calamity if you forget the Lord your God.

Lord. What is it to forget the Lord that's so terrible? Well, verse 11 tells us, doesn't it?

It's a rejection of his lordship. It's disobedience to his command. You forget the Lord by not keeping his commands and statutes. But you see, that's not only to reject his lordship, it's to reject his great love.

To forget him, you see, as verse 14 indicates, is to forget the whole history of the relationship that God has had with you.

To forget what he has been to you, forget what he's done for you. And to forget a relationship like that is intensely hurtful. You know that?

[38 : 03] To be forgotten like that, it's as though a part of you has been erased as if that relationship had never been. One of the most painful things you can hear, isn't it, is when a husband or wife says of their spouse in their old age when they've got terrible dementia, he doesn't even know who I am.

He doesn't even know who I am. That's an anguished cry, isn't it, of somebody whose life has been erased, this relationship as though it's never been. And that's what we do to God if we forget him.

That's what we do if, as verse 11 says, we are not keeping his commands. And you see, the reason that is so terrible is that, again, these commands, these statutes, these rules are the very things that govern the covenant of love that he has entered into with us.

And to abandon his commands is to abandon the vow of fidelity and love that we've made to him. It's to commit adultery against God. That's what you do if you commit adultery.

You're forgetting your spouse. It's not just moral disobedience, it's deliberate personal rejection of the worst kind. And you see, in this case with the Lord, it's taking all the wealth, all that he brings to the marriage covenant, taking all his gifts and then committing flagrant adultery and wanting a divorce, wanting to get rid of him and keep all the gifts that he's given us.

[39 : 30] It's a wholesale rejection of our Lord and of the lover of our souls in order just to have more things.

Indeed, the very things that he gave us as the tokens of his love, love gifts. That's how perverse it is. And that's why, I think, you see, in verse 19, Moses seems to equate this forgetting of God born out of material satisfaction, born out of plenty and the pride and the conceit that that can unmask.

He equates it with idolatry as going after other gods to worship them. There's no other mention of idolatry in this chapter, but of course, Paul tells us, doesn't he, that covetousness is idolatry.

The covetous heart, you see, will lead in the end to turn us away from God to desire the mere created things that he has made. That's the very heart of sin, isn't it what Paul says?

Exchanging the truth of God for a lie and worshipping creative things instead of God the creator who alone is forever blessed. That's what the first man did, God's son, Adam, in the garden, surrounded by all the bounty of God's blessings.

[40 : 47] And God said, there's one thing you must not do. If you do that, you will surely perish. And that's what happened. And God warns Israel, here also, his son.

Verse 20, if you do that, you will surely perish if you do not obey me. And the apostle tells us, doesn't he, that these things also are written for us.

That we might not desire evil as they did, but rather remembering our savior, the true son of God who didn't forget God, who did keep his commands, and follow in his way and allow his Holy Spirit to lead us both through times of testing and the blessings that that brings and privation and scarcity, but also through the real test of times of plenty when God does bless us with satisfaction and plenty.

How will we do that? Well, this whole book of Deuteronomy speaks repeatedly of the great theme of this chapter of remembering the Lord, not forgetting the Lord.

And it focuses so often on the real protection of times of remembrance, the real protection of times, of corporate remembrance, in times of both blessing and of testing.

[42 : 13] You see, God's people need always a humble remembering that obeys the Lord and a humble obedience that remembers the Lord. Forgetting him, you see, disobediently is the way of disaster.

So we're called to remember and never forget three key things, and they're all right here in this chapter. First, verse 14, that God alone is our Savior.

He redeemed us. He brought us out of slavery and he will lead us to his glorious freedom in the future. He's our Savior. And verses 15 and 16, we must remember that he alone is our sustainer.

He gives us every good gift in this life and he will shower his goodness and grace upon us. And of course, verse 11, that he alone is our sovereign.

And there, just as verses 1 and 6 and verse 20, his words alone are to guide our every thought and word and deed. How do we do that?

[43 : 16] How do we remember? Well, it's in obeying that we will truly be remembering him. The positive command there in verse 1 and verse 6, isn't it?

It's the opposite of verse 11 and verse 20 where you forget the Lord by not obeying him. We're to hear and obey. We're to do what he commands. That's how you remember the Lord.

That's how you'll love him truly. That's how you'll nourish the knowledge of him that he wants you to have. Whoever has my commands and keeps them, says the Lord Jesus, he it is who loves me and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Humble obedience that remembers the Lord. But also equally, you see, it's through the discipline of remembering all that God has done for us, all the way that he's led us as a savior, as a sustainer, as our sovereign.

It's as we remember that, that we will be kept in obedience to him. And that's why Israel's calendar was full of these times of real protection, real remembrance, not just the weekly Sabbath, but their great feasts, the Passover, where they remembered the Lord as savior.

[44 : 24] Tabernacles, where they remembered the God who sustained them through the wilderness and gifted them. And in all of these times, the weekly Sabbath, the feasts, at the heart of everything, was the reading of the law of God that reminded them of God's sovereign commands upon their life.

In other words, the routine remembering of the Lord in the corporate worship of God's people, that was centered around the celebration of God's mighty works and God's powerful words. And that is what protects them and keeps them from the forgetfulness that leads to disaster.

And it's no different for us, is it? God's given us the blessings of the regular routine of corporate remembrance, remembering his great works for us, remembering his words to us, so that we won't forget, so that we won't slide away into disaster through times of testing or through times of blessing.

The book of Hebrews in particular tells us repeatedly, doesn't it, we need one another for this if we're not to fall away from the living God. We're to exhort one another today, he says, that none may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, the pride in this chapter.

For we share in Christ, he says, if we hold our original confidence to the end. So how do we do that? Well, by not neglecting meeting together, says the apostle, as some are in the habit of doing.

[45 : 53] Are you in the habit of neglecting to meet together with the Lord's people regularly, week by week on the Lord's day and as much as you possibly can on that day? And in other times of fellowship, of study, of sustaining one another in prayer?

Some people think they don't need that. Maybe that's you. Maybe you think, well, the Lord's blessing me just fine with all kinds of blessings. And I read the Bible on my own, that's fine. I go to church occasionally when it suits me, that's fine.

Listen, friend, if that's you, hear God's word today. Beware, lest your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord in the midst of all this blessing that you're experiencing.

Times of blessing bring real testing. And your Bible warns you, doesn't it, to make sure that you humble yourself, that you realize your need to remember the Lord and to go on remembering Him and hearing His voice and doing what He commands in obedient faith and doing it together as God's people.

Now, there is real protection, there is vital protection in the discipline of corporate remembrance that God gives His church for our good.

[47 : 12] So let's not give up meeting together, says the Apostle, but rather encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. Encourage one another in humble obedience that remembers the Lord and in humble remembering that obeys the Lord.

So that whether we face times of plenty or times of great privation, we will not forget the Lord our God, but rather we'll remember every day that we live every single day by the breath that comes from His mouth.

That we'll remember that He is our life. He is our length of days. His word is our life. will have not by bread alone or for bread alone, but by everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord our God.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, how we need to be humbled by You. And so, Lord, if some of us this morning know that they are walking through the desert of great testing and great privation, desert full of terrible scorpions, snakes, and many things that would attack us, may they know, though this seems painful at this time, it is in Your hands for our good, for our glory, for all things work together for good to those who love Christ.

And if any of us this morning, Lord, is rejoicing in the abundance of Your goodness and grace, the blessings that You're sharing upon our lives, then help us, Lord, to take care, to beware, never to forget You.

[49 : 17] but in humble obedience to walk with You, remembering to praise You and thank You for every breath we take. And so help us to help one another to walk that road, our hand in Yours, in the way of our great Savior, Jesus Christ, in whom alone is all our hope and all our trust.

for we ask it for His sake. Amen.