

## Old Testament Lessons

OT Stories That Teach Us About God and Faith

June 14, 2020

- I. Warnings, Wisdom, Promises of God.
  - A. Last week we talked about God's use of miracles and monuments to strengthen Israel's faith and encourage them to trust and obey Him as they entered and took possession of the Promised Land. And I want to remind you that these stories were about what God was like as He prepared Israel to take the Land – and what He is like as He prepares us to live the Christian life. Today we will look at God's warning concerning wealth's ability to influence the Israelites to forget Him.
  - B. Prayer
- II. God warns Israel about the power of riches to motivate them to forget Him.
  - A. In preparation for Israel entering and possessing the Promised Land, God warned them about the link between gaining wealth and forgetting Him. We find this warning in **Deuteronomy 6:4-12**. In this section of scripture, Moses prepares the people for this warning by reminding them of several basic truths concerning God, about a proper and foundational response to God because of these truths, and about methods to help them remain faithful to God.
  - B. [4] Hear, O Israel! The **LORD is our God** (*that is, we serve and worship only Him*), the **LORD is one!** (*In other words, we don't worship and serve a pantheon or collection of Gods, we worship and serve just one God.*) [5] You **shall love** the LORD your God (*that is, you shall treasure Him and you shall **seek His good** in your choices and behavior*) with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
  - C. [6] These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be **on your heart** (*In other words, these truths are not only to be intellectually understood, approved, and proclaimed, they are **to be owned** so that they direct the way you live.*). [7] You shall **teach them** diligently to your sons and daughters and shall **talk of them** [with whomever you are with] when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. [8] You shall **bind them as a sign** (*or as a reminder*) on your hand and they shall be **as frontals** on

your forehead. [9] You shall **write them** on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- D. I want to stop here for a few minutes and talk about the four methods God presents in **vs 7-9** for helping us to remain faithful in living according to His word. And the context confirms that these methods are especially applicable for remaining faithful in the face of wealth.
1. In **vs 7**, God begins by telling us to **teach** the truths of His word to our children. In other words, we are to teach the next generation what we know about God, His word, and godly living.
    - a. But there is more to this than that, because teaching not only instructs those who are taught, it increases and enlarges the understanding and application of taught truths in the teacher. In other words, it is often the case that the teacher gets more from the lesson than the students.
    - b. And this happen because to explain something to someone requires thinking it through and understanding it enough to put it into words that make sense, that can be understood, and that can be applied in practical ways to real life situations.
    - c. Therefore, if you want to increase your understanding and practical application of God's word in your own life, teach it to the untaught – and especially the next generation.
  2. Again in **vs 7**, God says to **talk about** the truths of His word with whomever you are with. There are three points I want to make about this second method.
    - a. **First**, what is true about teachers applies here. The more you talk about God's truths to others, the more you have to think about how to have those truths make sense to the person you are talking to, and how those truths can be applied. This increases your understanding and recognition of the ways to apply God's truths to everyday life – including your life, while reinforcing their importance and use in your life.
    - b. **Second**, the more you talk about God's truths to others, the more they become a natural and practical part of your thinking, which in turn results in them becoming a natural part of your conversations with believers and unbelievers.
    - c. And **third**, as vessels who hold the truth of God's word and who have experience in applying God's word, we ought to bring God's truths into our conversations for the sake of those who need to hear them and understand how to apply them.

3. The **third** method God presents for helping us to remain faithful in living according to His word is found in **vs 8**. Here God says to **bind the truths** of His word as a **sign** (*or as a constant reminder*) **on our hand** (*that is, somehow make them inseparable from your physical body so that they are as close as your hand to remind you*) and as a **frontal** (*constant reminder*) **on our forehead**.
- a. It is reasonable to understand the **inseparable sign on the hand** to mean using God's truths as a constant reminder not to give in to the lusts of the flesh, and the **inseparable frontal on the forehead** to mean using God's truths to guard what you look at so that you do not turn away from God's truths to gratify the lust of the eyes.
  - b. Why is this so necessary? Here are two major reasons.
    - (1) **First**, the ungodly desires of your flesh and the ungodly desires of your eyes compel you to do ungodly things. They need to be reined in and held in check – which if you are like me requires constant vigilance and regularly reminding myself of the truth.
    - (2) **Second**, we are prone to compare ourselves to those obviously ungodlier than we – so that we appear more godly in our own eyes than we are. This results in treating methods like the one we are talking about as unnecessary. If you want to know how great your need is to practice a method like this, compare yourself to Jesus Christ and measure your behavior by the word of God.
  - c. At the office, I keep an 8.5x11 sign on the wall across from the keyboard of my computer because I sit there most of the time. I keep it there as a reminder of what I ought to be and why. The words on the sign are from **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**, which says, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not beating the air, but I buffet my body and make it my slave lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”
  - d. God says to use reminders like this if you want help in remaining faithful to living according to His word. How you work out these kinds of reminders is up to you, but making good

use of constant reminders to keep the evil desires of your flesh and your eyes in check is a tool or method God says will help you remain faithful to Him and His word.

4. The **fourth** method God presents is to post signs in key places that will remind you to remain godly when going out into the world and when coming back into your home. I observed many years ago that the hardest place to live like a Christian is in the home. Without question, it is relatively easy to remain godly at church or in church type settings or when everything is going as you would like. However, it is quite challenging to remain godly in the world when the pressures and influences to conform to the world are pressing in around you. And it is even more challenging to remain godly in the home where you too easily treat it as the place where you can let your guard down, relax, and just be yourself.
  5. What I am hoping you can see with this is that these four methods are tools for building and maintaining a godly life in the face of settings and situations that tempt us or push us to be ungodly. And as I said at the beginning, the context here in **Deuteronomy 6:4-12** makes these methods especially applicable when dealing with wealth. Which raises the question, are you making use of one or two or even all of these tools? If not, you ought to.
- E. [10] **Then it shall come about** when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, [11] and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied (*that is, when you have a sufficient amount of money and possessions to live a satisfying life today and feel secure that you can go on living this kind of satisfying life for years to come.*), [12] **then watch yourself** (*that is, be on the alert and guard your thoughts and desires, your choices and behaviors so*), that you **do not forget the LORD** who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”
1. I want to begin by affirming that wealth, in itself, is not the culprit or the great evil that God is warning us about.
  2. What God is warning us about is the **power of wealth** to affect our view of God, our need for God, and the way we live. According to God, wealth can have such an influence on us that we **forget Him** – specifically in relation to recognizing our need of Him, depending

on Him and trusting Him to be our provider and protector, giving Him the gratitude and thanks He deserves for all He's given and done, and subsequently how we live when we are wealthy.

3. Now you may be thinking this warning does not apply to you. Yet the reality is, we are wealthy – if not because of the amount of our income and personal possessions, then because of the goods and services we have access to and enjoy on a daily basis.
  4. So let me restate the warning: Wealth – which is measured by money and possessions – is a powerfully deceptive and desensitizing agent that seeks to deceive us into believing that it (*wealth*) is what provides the good life that we enjoy today, and it (*wealth*) is what secures a good life for years to come. Once we start believing this lie, wealth progressively desensitizes us (*numbs us*) to our need for God so that even though we may never neglect our religious practices, we will treat wealth as our provider and protector, which will result in abandoning humble dependence on God, justifying areas of disobedience to God, and neglecting thankfulness and gratitude for all God has and is doing on a daily basis to care for us.
- F. Possibly because it is so tempting for God's people to depend on their wealth to give them the sense of security the desire, Moses restates God's warning about wealth in a bit of a different way so that we see the tie between wealth, disobedience, pride, and forgetting God. We find this in **Deuteronomy 8:11-19**. . . [11] Beware (*that is, be vigilant and on guard so*) that you **do not forget** the LORD your God (*which will become obvious*) **by [your] not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes** which I (*Moses*) am commanding you today; [12] otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, [13] and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies (*remember, wealth is measured by money and possessions*), [14] then **your heart will become proud** (*In other words, you will think you have done this yourself, and since you have done so well, you don't need God's help.*) and **you will forget** the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (*That is, you will forget that it is God who both enabled and gave you this wealth.*)
- G. [17] [And if you forget it was God who enabled and gave you the wealth you have, you [will begin saying] in your heart, '**My power and the**

**strength of my hand made me this wealth.'** [18] But (*instead of saying such foolish things*), remember (*how much you need*) the LORD your God (*by using the methods from **Deut. 6:7-9** to keep reminding you*), for **it is He who IS GIVING you power to make wealth ...** [19] [Therefore,] 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. (*You see, wealth not only lures us into forgetting God, it lures us into treating wealth as a god and living like those who worship money.*)

- H. In the NT, Jesus warned us about wealth in His parable of the sower. In this parable, Jesus warned that the seed sown among the thorns results in a person hearing the word and responding accordingly, but over time, the worries of the world and **the deceitfulness of wealth** choke the word so that it no longer produces the kind of godly life it is intended to produce (**Matthew 13:22**).
1. Notice, Jesus used the phrase, “**the deceitfulness of wealth.**” In other words, Jesus is saying wealth has a **deceitful** side. And the deceitful side of wealth is **its inference** that as long as we have enough money and possessions, we are safe and secure in the face of **present** and **future** need. And the deceitfulness of this inference is that when we experience it, as so many of us do, it gives us a comforting sense of security.
  2. In my way of thinking, one example of this deceptive inference is insurance, be it home, auto, medical, retirement, nursing home care, or death insurance.
    - a. We buy insurance with the extra money we have today in order to ensure we have enough money and possession in the future to continue living a good life in case we be struck by some sort of disaster that would take our wealth from us.
    - b. In other words, we use our current wealth to guarantee future wealth should we be faced with some costly accident, illness, or disaster that would otherwise take our wealth if we had no insurance.
    - c. And so I ask you, who needs God or even seeking God’s kingdom and His righteous first when we can use insurance to secure a reasonably good life in the future?
  3. My purpose here is not to condemn insurance – as if it, in and of itself, is the great evil. After all, some insurance is mandated by law, and some comes our way as part of our employment.

- a. However, I do want to make it clear that the deceitfulness of wealth can be so clever and indirect that we may give in to it without stopping to consider what we are doing so that it has its harmful effect on our humble dependence on God without us realizing what we have done to ourselves.
  - b. You see, losing the mindset and life-style of dependence on God is a great loss, because it makes us live as if we don't need God in the most practical and daily affairs of life – which in turn **confines** our trust in God to eternal salvation and those rare occasions when we think we need Him. And this turns love of God, along with loyalty and faithfulness to God, into a theological ideal that effects our creed but not how we live. And when the truths of God are required for our creeds but not for determining how we live day to day, we have arrived at the place of forgetting God – regardless of how religious we are.
4. Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 6:24**, “**No one** can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

### III. Conclusion

- A. So what is the point of all this for us today? The point is to pay heed to God's warning to Israel on this matter, because we are just as human and just as religious as they. Should we avoid wealth? Not necessarily. Should we fear wealth? Absolutely!
- B. Therefore, let us take seriously God's warning that wealth – which is measured by money and possessions – is a powerfully deceptive and desensitizing agent that seeks to deceive us into believing that it (*wealth*) is what provides the good life that we enjoy today, and it (*wealth*) is what secures a good life for years to come. Once we start believing this lie, wealth progressively desensitizes us to our need for God so that even though we may never neglect our religious practices, we will treat wealth as our provider and protector, which will result in abandoning humble dependence on God, justifying areas of disobedience to God, and neglecting thankfulness and gratitude for all God has and is doing on a daily basis to care for us.