



Poured Out

September 3-9, 2023

MAIN POINT

God teaches us in the wilderness that abundant life does not come from any of God's good gifts, but from *Him alone*.

INTRODUCTION

What would you say has been the best time or season of your life so far?

What about that season made life so good?

Has there also been a time or season of your life that you can readily identify as the "worst"? What good, if anything, came (or may be coming) from that season?

Our natural inclination is to elevate good gifts from God to the point that they determine our happiness in God. God provides our needs, but His provision is never meant to become the object of our worship. Rather, in the highs and lows of life, God's unchanging Word sustains us and points us to Him as the only One worthy of worship. Even in times of wilderness wandering, God teaches us that abundant life does not come from any of His good gifts, but from Him alone.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [DEUTERONOMY 8:1-5](#).

What three instructions did God give His people in these verses (see vv. [1](#), [2,5](#))?

How do these instructions relate to relationship with God today?

Manna was not given only to satisfy Israel's hunger but also to show them they had deeper needs than even hunger. God wanted His people to see and know that He was behind the provision. Manna merely satisfies an appetite. God satisfies our souls in a way that is full and everlasting. We must always see God as our ultimate source of satisfaction.

All people have divinely created longings that exist universally in the human heart. God made humanity with a spiritual nature that can find satisfaction only in the Creator. And He does satisfy us! The pursuits of this world make terrible gods because they cannot satisfy our deepest needs. Those earthly circumstances and pursuits only satisfy temporal needs and provisions (and even those are a gift from God, ultimately). The point for us is that we have greater and deeper longings that come from, and can only be met, by God. Just as God provided for His people in the past, He provides for us today.

How can we be thankful for God's provision even when we are living in uncertain times? Name some ways God has met your needs in the past year.

READ [DEUTERONOMY 8:6-14](#).

What promise was there for God's people in verses [6-9](#)?

Is this promise also for God's people today? How so?

What is the warning in verses [10-14](#)?

What, then, is the benefit of difficult and changing times?

God promised that if the Hebrews would obey His commands, then they would inherit the land. Obviously the place being described was wonderful. But Scripture is not telling us is that if we are faithful to obey God and keep Him at the level of primary importance, we will get everything our hearts desire.

The Scriptures are filled with people who obey God and still struggle (Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, the prophets, Paul, etc.). Often we will not see the blessing we are promised until heaven. This is why Paul was able to write things like, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” from prison. He understood that everything that came to Him came from God. When God becomes the one we want the most, we will always live with an unshakable peace and satisfaction that supersedes any physical blessing a job can provide.

Why should you pursue God even when you don’t see the same kinds of extravagant physical blessings described in verses 7-9?

As we grow in grace, we become as much a student of ourselves as we are of God. The unguarded heart is always vulnerable to sin. Part of accepting God’s blessing is recognizing where it came from. Developing this type of thoughtful and gracious heart will keep us from drifting away from God as our center. God is the supreme provider. All else remains secondary when we locate our true provision in Him.

What have you been learning about yourself as you’ve sought to depend upon God in this season? Where are areas of strength? Where are areas of weakness?

READ [DEUTERONOMY 8:15-20](#).

The Israelites did not get through the desert because they were resourceful, intelligent, or even good people; they got through because God loved them. God loves us, chooses us, and lavishes us with His grace and provision because He wants to, then and now ([7:7-9](#)). We often prop ourselves up, as in verse 17, and fool ourselves into thinking we are the true masters of our fates—but the Bible begs to differ. To self-sufficiency the Bible says, “But remember the Lord your God.” Only God can give us what we need; in His love for us, He allows us to participate in His provision through work.

How do we find the right balance between doing good work and trusting God for our provision?

God wanted His people to be a beacon to the nations; for that to happen, the Israelites could not embrace the idols of the people around them. Our God is a jealous God. When we say that God is jealous, it means that He is concerned with His glory and love for His people! God doesn’t want you to embrace idols because they are deadly for your soul.

Has your work ever become an idol? If so, what caused you to turn back to God? How do we learn to recognize when this happens?

APPLICATION

How are you personally coming to Deuteronomy 8 today: as one who is wandering in the wilderness, one experiencing the abundance of God’s provision and blessing, one who has prioritized one of God’s good gifts over God Himself, one who desperately

wants to learn from God, other? Explain.

How can this group pray for you in that?

What are some steps you can take to maintain right perspective in difficult times?
In good times?

PRAYER

Thank God for His great love and provision, drawing us into deeper relationship with Him in every circumstance. Ask Him to help you remember His good gifts and to acknowledge Him alone as being worthy of your worship. Ask Him to use your current circumstances to teach you more about who He is and who you are in relationship to Him.

COMMENTARY

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-20

8:1. Israel could truly hope to live if they would follow every command that Moses was issuing on God's behalf. Life without God at the center is a slow form of death; so Moses urged Israel to take God's commands seriously. In a similar spirit, Paul warned, "The widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives" ([1 Timothy 5:6](#)). If Israel responded properly, the nation would not only really live; they would also increase in numbers and would possess the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

8:2. If the nation needed any encouragement to follow the Lord, they had only to remember how the Lord had led them for the past forty years. That leading had been focused on two purposes. First, God had sought to humble them. It may seem strange to think of a nation of slaves needing to be humbled, but they had needed precisely that. Pride is native to the human heart, and it knows no socioeconomic or ethnic boundaries. It was the first sin, and it forms the wellspring for all others. Solomon observed, "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes" ([Proverbs 6:16-17](#)).

Second, God in his leading of Israel had determined to test them in order to know what was in their heart—in particular, whether obedience to his commands was their intent. The older generation had failed on both counts and had been sentenced to roam meaninglessly until they died away. The imminent invasion of Canaan would show what was in the hearts of the 109 younger generation. They would have to be tested about their own devotion to the words of the Lord.

8:3-4. Moses' hearers had themselves been humbled, of course, even though they were mere teenagers at the time when Israel sinned at Kadesh Barnea. They had, through experiencing hunger and having that longing satisfied by divinely given manna (mentioned here for the first time in Deuteronomy), learned a critical lesson: man does not live on bread alone. His spiritual needs are as profound as his physical needs, and they must be satisfied. That spiritual longing can only be met, however, by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (For more on manna, see "Deeper Discoveries.") Here we find an explicit reference to divinely created longings that exist universally in the human heart. God made humanity with a spiritual nature that can find satisfaction in nothing less than the Creator.

Moses recalled how God's provision for Israel went further than providing their food. He miraculously provided for their clothing and their health as well: their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell during the four decades that Israel wandered in the wilderness.

8:5. Still, all God's disciplinary actions were paternal in nature. He dealt with Israel as a

man disciplines his son. It was critical that the nation know in their heart that the painful experiences they underwent in the wilderness were the product of a loving as well as a sovereign God. The differences between punishment and discipline have to do with both the intent behind the actions and the affections which motivated them. People sometimes punish to exact judgment for past actions. God disciplines in order to teach and always in the interest of those whom he disciplines.

8:6. Moses described the life God desires from his people in terms of three categories. The first is behavioral: they were to observe the commands he gave in what they did. The second category is habitual and goes deeper. Israel was to walk in God's ways whether a specific commandment addressed their behavior or not. They could always ask, "Is what I am about to do reflective of the character of God?" The third category is motivational: Israel was to revere God at all times. They were to possess a reverential fear that would motivate them to take no chances. Unless they were sure that what they were about to do was acceptable before God, they should refrain.

8:7-9. Such ethical care is not to be simply based on what God may do to them for violations of his covenant. Morality should be based as well on the recognition of God's generosity and faithfulness. In the case of Israel, their 110 behavior was to be motivated by gratitude for the good land he was giving them. It was, after all, a land with streams and pools of water that could provide for them and for their animals and crops. Underground were springs that emerged in the valleys and hills, making it possible to grow wheat and barley. The land contained vines and trees that yielded useful and delicious fruit and places where caches of honey could be found. Because the land was fertile, bread would not be scarce there, and there would be such an abundance that Israel would lack nothing.

Israel's new land would contain mineral wealth as well as natural fertility. Its rocks contained iron that could be used for weapons and household implements. Israelites were familiar with iron smelting from their time in Egypt ([Deuteronomy 4:20](#)). However, they did not possess the technology they would need to craft iron implements effectively. The native Canaanites, by contrast, had already learned to construct iron chariots ([Joshua 17:18](#)). Copper deposits were later found and mined from the region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba and exported through the harbor at Ezion-geber (cp. [1 Kings 9:26-28](#)). Copper was used in a variety of alloys, including in combination with tin to produce bronze.

8:10. A land filled with such resources was designed to have a spiritual impact when it was received. When Israel had eaten and was satisfied, they were directed to praise the Lord... for the good land that they were enjoying. Combined with 8:1-5, this paragraph shows how God uses both positive reinforcement and painful adversity to achieve his purposes with his people. As a wise father, he understands how to apply these elements in precisely the proper proportions to accomplish his purpose, and his word is always productive: "My word that goes out from my mouth... will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" ([Isaiah 55:11](#)).

8:11. Prosperity brings with it as many spiritual hazards as adversity. Although Israel was about to make the transition from a nation of homeless ex-slaves to a settled people, they would face many dangers. In particular, they would need to be careful and not forget the Lord. As they were about to invade the land, when life and death lay in the balance each day, they could hardly deny their need of God's favor and protection. Later, when their enemies were vanquished and life was less tense, they would find themselves 111 lulled into a false sense of independence. That might lead to a pattern of failing to observe his commands, his laws and

his decrees.

8:12-14. Israel would need to exercise spiritual alertness and recognize their natural tendency to forget the one who gave them everything. Otherwise, that inclination would cause them great sorrow and dismay. Once they began to build fine houses and settle down and to see their herds and flocks and personal wealth increase, they could fall victim to pride and spiritual arrogance.

The godly person is as much a student of himself as he is of God. The unguarded heart is always vulnerable to folly, and God extended his kindness to Israel not only in his gifts but also in his counsel. Becoming spiritually lax is not an option for a person who would be Christlike. The greatest test comes when the crisis is over and we seem to have won the battle. Then the heart tends to become proud; and with pride comes the lack of a sense of need.

8:15-16. In contrast to the rich land Israel was about to enter, God had led them through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land. Making the land doubly inhospitable, it was inhabited by venomous snakes and scorpions. In order to provide for the basic necessities of survival, God brought Israel water out of the hard rock so common to that area.

Even in the midst of such hardships, however, the Lord provided for Israel's thousands. He gave them manna to eat in the desert, a food that their fathers knew nothing about (a sentiment that is repeated from v. 3). He forced them, as he led them through that forbidding land, into a position where they had to realize their dependence on him. The process was designed to humble and to test them so that in the end they might prosper physically and spiritually. God always has his eye on the end of the process of spiritual formation rather than its immediate or short-term results. Believers may not enjoy the process, but they can always praise him for the ultimate benefits of spiritual growth.

8:17-18. The most formidable barrier to the enjoyment of that prosperity lay not in the enemies who lived across the Jordan River but deep within the pride-stained heart of every Israelite. They had it within them to conclude that their own power and strength had produced the wealth they would enjoy.

God's antidote for this foolish conclusion was to encourage Israel to remember the Lord and recognize him as the source of the ability to produce wealth. The successes that Israel was soon to enjoy were nothing more than confirmations of the covenant that God had made with their forefathers.

8:19-20. A prideful independence could take Israel even further, however. If they should forget the Lord and engage in the worship of other gods, they would soon be destroyed. They need only remember that the nations 112 west of the Jordan River were themselves being driven from the land because of their failure to worship their Creator. The survival of Israel and its future testimony to the virtues of Yahweh hung in the balance.