

Beware, Lest You Forget!

Deuteronomy 6:10–25

by Felton Spraggins

“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, 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 shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, . . .” (6:10–25).

Chapter 6 finds its foundation in the danger of Israel’s forgetting and departing from Jehovah. Deuteronomy 4:9 mentions the danger accentuated in this chapter:

Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons (4:9).

In 6:10–25, we see the realism of life, not only for the Israelites, but for all of God’s people in every age.

Just as Israel was in danger of forgetting God, so are we. In the hour of prosperity, and at times when all goes well, men forget God, and forget their commitment to God. So what did Moses command Israel to do in order to assure their inheritance? These passages suggest three major challenges that should help Israel remember her relationship to God. They apply to Christians today. There are three challenges we should never forget if we are to receive our spiritual inheritance.

REMEMBER YOUR RESOURCES

In biblical faith, the remembrance of God’s

past mercies and His delivering acts is fundamental. We must never forget the source of all our spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3–7).

Israel was to remember their resource for the blessings they had in Canaan. They should always be mindful that all their blessings came from the Creator of the universe. Moses spoke of their future blessings in Canaan:

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, 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 shall eat and be satisfied (6:10, 11).

The Lord was the source of all that they possessed. It was God who had brought them into the land which He had promised to their fathers. Israel would have great and splendid cities which she had not built, houses full of all the good things their hearts could only imagine, cisterns filled with water which they had not hewn out, and vineyards and olive trees which they had not planted.

God looked beyond the conquest of Canaan to the time when the people would be enjoying all the things He had provided. Houses, wells, and vineyards could make people comfortable and self-satisfied. Instead of being nomads, they would be landowners and farmers. It was at that time they needed to be extremely watchful and not forget that it was the Lord who had delivered them from Egypt and given them the land promised to their grandfathers.

God sent a warning in verse 12: “Then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought

you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Notice the relationship between "and you shall eat and be satisfied" (6:11) and "then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord" (6:12). It would have been easy, and later became easy, for the children of Israel to forget all the Lord had done for them after they were "at ease in Zion." Moses warned that self-sufficiency would be dangerous and that in their conceit they would overlook their weaknesses; therefore, self-sufficiency would bring the Lord's destroying judgment.

Forgetting the Lord meant more than a lapse of memory. It meant rejecting the covenant and refusing to love Him. They would be spurning the One who had made them into a nation and given them a purpose in the world.

In these verses, we see the realism of life for both Israel of old and Christians today. Self-sufficiency is false and dangerous for the children of God in every age. There is no such thing as a self-made person. Everything we have we have received from the Lord. We own nothing of our own; all has been given to us. Paul wrote of the Corinthians: "For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

As God's children, we must never forget our heavenly Father who gives us all things to enjoy. These passages make it clear that God is the source of all we possess.

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains. . . .
(Psalms 24:1).

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

We forget so easily that we are only stewards or caretakers of all we have. We become attached to the things of life, thinking that they are ours. Those who are rich in this world are to put their trust "on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17b).

REMEMBER YOUR REDEMPTION

Their redeemer was the Lord and their redemption was from the house of slavery (6:12). Israel had been slaves in Egypt, living there for more than four hundred years. They had been

delivered from this bondage by means of the Passover lamb. When its life was given, its blood shed, and its blood marked on the doorposts, the death angel passed over.

Jesus Christ is the Christian's Passover lamb. "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7b). Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). We are redeemed by His blood and our sins are forgiven. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

We must never forget the cross! The Lord's Supper is a memorial to help us remember the Lord's death. It is a living reminder of the Savior—who He was, what He did, and how He did it!

REMEMBER YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Accepting His gracious gifts of deliverance from Egypt and a homeland in Canaan obligated the Israelites to loyalty, worship, and obedience. They had agreed to follow God and had of their own volition said: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 19:8). There are three basic obligations found in their relationship to God.

"You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name" (6:13). First, Israel is to fear only the Lord. This is not the type of fear that intimidates, causing us to withdraw, but the kind that causes us to appreciate the power of God. It creates within us a desire to draw near for security and strength.

The Lord was not to be trifled with. He was the real giver of all things, and He is a jealous God (6:15). Israel must not put God on trial seeking proof of His presence and power.

Israel was not to tempt the Lord as they had in Massah. To tempt the Lord is to impose on Him conditions, making the people's obedience contingent upon His meeting their demands. When the Israelites needed water at Massah, they proposed that Moses prove God's presence by producing water (Exodus 17:1-7). God's anger is kindled at such doubting of His sovereignty.

Second, Israel was to worship Him. The evidence that one fears the Lord is his service to God. The first sign that we are forgetting God is our lack of service to Him and others. Therefore,

Moses encourages Israel: "You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you. . . ." (6:17, 18).

Diligence in living up to their wholehearted commitment would assure them of successful occupation of the land (6:18, 19). Let Israel be faithful, and God would faithfully fulfill His promises.

They must not imitate their new neighbors by worshiping or sacrificing to their tribal deities. The Lord did not accept them as gods, or as rivals for the loyalty of His chosen people. If the children of Israel should insult Him by dallying with those artificial gods, the Lord would judge and punish them.

Third, Israel was to swear by His name. This involves making public acknowledgment of God. To swear by His name meant that they would publicly recognize His presence and omniscience. The spirit of this command is kept by being willing, on all proper occasions, boldly and without shame, to avow God to be our God.

They are to openly declare themselves to be on the Lord's side. They were to "do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord" (6:18). Instead of making a name for themselves, they are to make a name for Jehovah in the land. Their relationship with Him was serious, and He expected them to serve Him and make the serious vows in His name.

As Christians, we understand and accept the Lord's blessings for our lives, and we are under obligation to obey His will.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (Colossians 3:17).

CONCLUSION

The children of Israel were never to forget that it was God who was their Savior. If the children of Israel should "forget the Lord," He would not forget them. God gave a solemn warning that if they forgot Him, judgment would follow: "For the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth" (6:15).

As God's children, we must never forget the creative power and the redemptive grace bestowed on us through Jesus Christ. We can never forget our obligations to God. Paul gave this serious warning:

And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing our retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).