

Life In The Wilderness

Introduction. When you think of the wilderness wanderings, mostly you think of the sins of Israel, but God's actions toward the Israelites were holy. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses described life in the wilderness. This chapter is an exhortation to obedience based on God's mercy and goodness in His dealings with Israel (Exodus 34:5-7).

One comforting facet of God is His reliability. God has not changed in all these centuries (Malachi 3:6). He treated the Israelites with mercy and goodness, therefore we can expect the same in this new dispensation (Hebrews 13:8).

Deuteronomy 8:1 sets the tone for the entire chapter. If the Israelites were obedient to God, He would bless them. Even though they were rebellious, He continued to be merciful and compassionate. God's patience with Israel finally ended with their captivities, but He had blessed them all through their history.

I. It Was A Life Guided By God

- A. Deuteronomy 8:2 states that God had led Israel in the wilderness. He led them by day with a pillar of cloud and by night with a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21).
- B. How blessed is the divine guidance of God! We do not have the miraculous manifestation of pillars of cloud and fire today, but what we do have is the most sufficient guide man could ever have (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).
- C. After the Lord lost some of His disciples because they would not accept His teaching, He asked the twelve if they wanted to leave too. Simon Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:68). These words of life will guide us to God (Psalm 119:9-10, 97, 105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- D. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. For many today, this method is just too plain and unappealing. They would rather believe in the false notion that the Holy Spirit dwells directly in the heart. However, the Holy Spirit can only dwell in our hearts because of the word of God.

II. It Was A Life Of Humility Before God

- A. Deuteronomy 8:2 says that God led the children of Israel through the wilderness wanderings so that He might humble them. Anyone familiar with the story of the Israelites knows of their transgressions at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:1-35).
- B. Because of this sin, God was compelled to humble them. He had to put them in a position where they would allow Him to hold first place in their hearts and minds. Oh, how we need humility! The Lord was the perfect demonstration of it (Matthew 11:29; John 13:1-15; Philippians 2:5-11).
- C. How many problems in the church do you think are caused by a lack of humility? I bet if you were totally honest and thought of all the problems that had ever occurred in a congregation, the biggest majority would be tied to selfishness (James 4:6, 10).
- D. Humility is a virtue that everyone preaches, no one practices, and yet everyone is content to hear. The teacher thinks it is good for the student to hear; the preacher thinks it is good for the congregation to hear; and the congregation thinks it is good for the preacher to hear! God's humbling of His servants are for their good (Deuteronomy 8:16).

III. It Was A Life Sustained By God

- A. The Lord had fed His people manna and gave them water in the wilderness so they would survive (Deuteronomy 8:3, 15). The sustenance of their life was as miraculous as their salvation which God had so graciously provided.
- B. The Lord is just as determined to sustain His people today. In John 4:14, Jesus said that He was living water and in John 6:31-35, Jesus said He was the bread of life. These, of course, were not physical blessings, but was the spiritual sustenance that redeems us from the bondage of sin (Ephesians 1:7-8) and promises us a crown of life in eternity for those who are faithful (Revelation 2:10).
- C. God has promised us long ago that there would be provision in Christ and He has fulfilled His promises (Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 6:13-18). If we are the vilest sinner but are willing to trust and obey, God will fulfill His promise in our lives and wipe away our sins (Acts 3:19).
- D. While not as important as the spiritual sustenance we enjoy, God also provides for us physically. This began all the way back in the garden (Genesis 1:29), and the psalmists commented on these blessings (Psalm 33:18-19; 34:10; 37:16; 104:10-18). The New Testament continues revealing how much the heavenly Father cares for us (Matthew 6:32; 10:30; Revelation 12:6, 14).

IV. It Was A Life Of Hope In God

- A. In Deuteronomy 8:7-9, Moses recites a description of the good land that lay before the Israelites. Their ancestors had murmured and sinned against God all those years and it kept them out of the promised land, but now it was time for them to remember God and His commandments (Deuteronomy 8:11). It was time for them to forget what lay behind and press on to what lies ahead.
- B. We must learn the same lesson. Our entire lives should be built on hope in God through Christ (Romans 15:13). When this earthly pilgrimage is over, we will receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:3-9).
- C. In Paul's life, hope was perhaps his most forceful influence (Philippians 3:12-14). He had learned to conquer all of life's circumstances so that what remained was a pure hope in God (Hebrews 6:19-20). This hope pierced the veil of Heaven itself and stands as the fulfillment of God's promise (Titus 1:1-3).

V. It Was A Life Of Praise To God

- A. Deuteronomy 8:10 commands the Israelites to bless the Lord for the land He has given to them. The land of Canaan would fully satisfy their needs. When they enjoyed the harvest of the crop or the fruit of the vine, they would know it was from God and it must be to God that they direct their praise.
- B. The child of God who has been forgiven of sins and shown mercy and compassion must, above all others, give praise to God for His wonderful grace (Psalm 103:1-5; 116:12-14; Hebrews 13:15).
- C. Those who are ungrateful for what they receive are an abomination to God. Later in the Israelite's history when they turned away from God to serve idols, the prophets rebuked them because God had provided for them, but to no avail (Hosea 13:4-6). When the Lord cleansed the ten lepers, only one turned back to

praise God for what had been done (Luke 17:17-18). Everything is God's, and we owe it to Him to be grateful (Psalm 24:1).

VI. It Was A Life Empowered By God

- A. Deuteronomy 8:18 states that they must remember God, and they were not to think that their prosperity had anything to do with their own merit. It was God's grace in keeping with His covenant that had provided for them, and it is God's grace that will provide for us and make us what we are (1 Corinthians 15:10).
- B. Have you ever heard anyone say, "I want to be a Christian, but I have struggled with my sin and just cannot beat it?" No wonder! The power lies, not within ourselves, but within Christ. The gospel has the power, as it dwells in our hearts, to change the sinner to a saint (Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 5:24). The secret to living soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:12) is found in subduing sinful desires by the law of Christ dwelling in the spirit or inner man (Romans 8:13; Ephesians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).
- C. Your life can have power, assurance, and victory (John 16:33). As love for the Son of God grows, sin has less luster in your eyes. As we continue to concentrate on Christ, fewer matters can distract us from walking with Him.

Conclusion. Every day of our lives can have the same loving relationship that God had with Israel. But, Deuteronomy 8:11, 19-20 sternly warns about the necessity of obedience. If you are here and desire of this kind of life, you need to become a Christian. Obey the gospel today or come back to God if you have sinned. The Lord waits to bless you if you will obey.