

Doomed to Repeat | January 13, 2021

Week 3 | Deuteronomy 8 | “Humility and Hindsight”

Now, a couple weeks ago, we kicked-off a brand-new series called "Doomed to Repeat." The whole premise of this series is to teach you principles that'll help you avoid repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

To show how to do this, we started in Joshua 1. There we heard God tell Israel that they need only trust and obey the commands of Scripture. God will give the nation of Israel courage, strength, success, and prosperity.

Last week, we moved backward in the narrative from the Promise of the Land to Moses's death. There, in Deuteronomy 30, the Children of Israel were given some final instructions. He reiterates their need to trust and obey God, but he also encouraged them to repent when they fail to do so. The one who repents past mistakes is less likely to repeat that same mistake again than one who never repents.

Today, as we continue our progress through Israel's story backward, we come upon another speech. This one, like last week, is presented by Moses. But instead of entering the promised land, as in Deut. 30; here, in Deut. 8, the Israelites had just finished the forty-year wanderings in the desert. It was time for a review of what had just occurred.

Now, we talked briefly about this last week, but suffice to say, a journey which should've only taken four months turned into forty years because of unbelief. And Moses is now speaking to a generation who knows full-well about the perils of unbelief. They, themselves, had witnessed as their parents and grandparents dropped, one by one, in the wilderness simply because they didn't believe God. And, as Moses will tell them, a big part of why that generation failed to trust, obey, and believe God is because they lacked humility and hindsight.

READ: Deuteronomy 8 (ESV)

¹ “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 that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ 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, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your

clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. ⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

¹¹ “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹² lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ 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, ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. ¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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.

As I said in the introduction, two principles would help this new generation avoid repeating past mistakes: humility and hindsight. The Israelites who dropped in the wilderness had a variety of problems. Still, chief amongst them is that they were prideful and prone to forget what God had done for them. But before we expand on those two ideas, I want you to notice how God characterized the wilderness wanderings themselves. No doubt, the children of Israel hated those years. I’m sure that they wanted to be done with it and move on and never look back on it again. To some, the wondering years may have appeared to be a cruel joke. To others, those years were righteous retribution for their failures. But to God, they weren't a joke, nor were

they only a punishment. Instead, God says those forty-years were meant as a test that reveals the hearts of his people.

READ: Deuteronomy 8:2 (ESV)

² And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

I will be the first to admit that life difficulties are never pleasant, but they are necessary for personal growth. This new generation wouldn't have chosen to walk through the wilderness all those years. But I can guarantee that afterward, they would not soon forget the lessons they learned during that time. Lessons they would end up telling their children and their children's children. About how their own parents and grandparents didn't believe, and so God exiled them. About how, even though they were being punished for their unbelief, God remained faithful to them and didn't abandon them. God was so faithful despite their failures that he not only provided food from heaven, but He also made it so that their clothes and shoes wouldn't wear out. My goodness, God didn't even allow their feet to swell on that long, weary road.

You see, God wanted to ensure those wilderness wanderings were put in a proper historical context. They were never meant to destroy his people. He is not a vindictive and vengeful God who enjoys taking out those who make mistakes. But he is a good Father who wishes to teach his children some lessons. These forty-years were not intended to destroy but discipline.

READ: Deuteronomy 8:5 (ESV)

⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.

God disciplines as a good father disciplines his son; not to break, not to bruise, and not to belittle, but to build.

Now, understand, God uses testing not only to burn away any disobedience; but also, God tests us when we haven't failed him to refine the good qualities already there. Meaning, no matter if it's because of obedience or disobedience, the Child of God's testing is a good thing. In fact, this idea of discipline and testing as the tools by which God purifies and strengthens his children is found throughout the Scriptures (cf. Isa. 48:10).

READ: Psalm 66:8-12 (ESV)

⁸ Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, ⁹ who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. ¹⁰ For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. ¹¹ You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; ¹² you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

READ: Proverbs 17:3 (ESV)

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.

Even in the NT, God's testing is put in a favorable light.

READ: James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Often the world misses this in their forms of discipline. The world often doesn't want to discipline with the intent of strengthening someone; the world often wants punishment with the goal of breaking someone. But God's discipline doesn't break us; it builds us. In fact, throughout Scripture, biblical discipline isn't necessarily equivalent to final judgment. Instead, the biblical concept of discipline can be understood as training, like an athlete who disciplines his body through practice and repetition.

The writer of Hebrews quotes this passage in Deut. 8 and then makes the same application about discipline that we are making today.

READ: Hebrews 12:11-11 (ESV)

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

We live in a cruel and unforgiving world. So much so that even when you do the right thing, you can be punished for it. Or, as the old adage goes, "No good deed goes unpunished." Because of

the messed-up world we live in, even acts of kindness, generosity, and love can backfire on those who offer them. But only the Christian can benefit from such an unfair system because of his relationship with God. Because we know God is the ultimate judge and not this world. Every misfortune, heartache, and difficulty we face in this life is remembered and rewarded in the next life if we bear our testing well.

Now, this is not to say that God wants to give us a wearisome life. No, as I've said almost every week since starting this series, he has given us abundant life (cf. Jn. 10:10). Even in our passage today, God reminds the children of Israel that he wants to bless them. He wants them to be happy (cf. Deut. 8:7-10).

But while God wants Israel to be happy, the thing he wants more than to give them gifts and make them joyful, is their obedience. He didn't want to destroy Israel, he wanted to discipline them. And in so doing, he wanted to build them into a people of integrity, loyalty, and strength. He wanted to make them into a people who were worthy of his blessings.

Discipline, when done in the hand of our heavenly Father, makes us better. It yields the fruit of righteousness. That just as earthly fathers discipline their children in the hope that it'll make them more mature, more like them, so too does our heavenly father disciplines and test us in the hopes that it'll make us more righteous, more like Him.

This is what God had done to the children of Israel. He had discipline them, not destroyed them. The people they were now were purged of the unbelief that plague the generation before them. It may have taken forty years, but they were now more trusting of God and more obedient to his commands than ever before.

And so, to keep them that way, Moses gives them two principles that help them avoid repeating the mistakes of their parents:

i. Humility OVER Selfishness

READ: Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (ESV)

² And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ 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, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Here, Moses tells the children of Israel that they were humbled. If it wasn't for God, they would've all been destroyed in the wilderness. Yet God fed them with food they couldn't fully understand.

In fact, manna is actually a Hebrew phrase that means, "What is it?" So, basically, for all those years, they had "what is it?" cereal, "what is it?" sandwiches, and "what is it?" pizza. They were sustained by a substance that they could not explain. Why? Because God wanted to teach them that they did not, and could not, survive in this life by simple hard work. They survived, and they succeeded because they live by the word of the Lord.

The Children of Israel could not plow the ground in the wilderness. They could not forage for food in the desert. So, God gave them heavenly food. This food was God's word put in a tangible and edible form, which then literally sustained their life. No wonder they could not explain it better. How would you describe a concept, like God's word, given a physical shape, texture, and taste? It would be like trying to explain a miracle. It must've been truly humbling to not have any control over your own life. To be left at the mercy of God for daily sustenance. Yet that is precisely the place we ought always to be.

This is the point the writer of Proverbs makes:

READ: Proverbs 30:7-9 (ESV)

⁷Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: ⁸Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: ⁹Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

God has and will provide for the essentials of his children. What we must remember is that while God has promised to meet our needs, he has not promised to satisfy our greed. Greed is nothing more than pride wielding a wallet. If we seek to use our resources for our own gains rather than for God, we will soon forget it is God who sustained your life up until this point. The pride that one can control their destiny through an abundant bank account is a slippery slope away from God. Humility is only the check which keeps us from going down the wrong path and forgetting the One who got us to where we are.

ii. HINDSIGHT OVER FORGETFULNESS

READ: Deuteronomy 8:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹² lest, when you have eaten and

are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God...

READ: Deuteronomy 8:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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.

When we are in dire straits, we are sensitive to our need for God to move. However, when we are on smoother roads, that sensitivity tends to diminish. Meaning, apathy is often the companion of abundance. When the going is good, we do not feel our needs as much and fail to turn to God. We are too full to know we still need filling. Trials are meant to shore up our defenses and show us what really matters. But just because our test is over doesn't mean the principles we learned going through those trials are any less important now. In fact, those very principles may even help you avoid the same difficulties again. Hence, to keep ourselves from forgetting what God has done, we must always remind ourselves what God has done.

Our past experiences shape who we are now and who we will be in the future. God is a good Father who tests us to strengthen us, and once testing has come to an end, the last thing he wants us to do is forget the lessons of the test! Our memories keep us from avoiding the mistakes of the past.

Remembrance is a critical component of a faithful life. For instance, we, as Christians, regularly participate in the Lord's Supper. We take the bread and the cup as a form of worship, it is true, but its primary function is that of recollection. We actively engage in a custom that forces us to remember (cf. Mar. 14:22-25; Lu. 22:18-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Throughout the Psalms, we find the writers imploring us to remember repeatedly (cf. Ps. 9:1).

READ: Psalm 77:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. ¹² I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. ¹³ Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.

READ: Psalm 143:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands. ⁶ I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

Dr. Suess famously said, "Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory." Every day you walk with God is a day worth remembering. And while we cannot remember every single thing that has happened to us, indeed, we can pick out memories where God showed up in a big, big way. These mental memorials stand as a testament to God's faithfulness. Though they are in our past, looking at them will give us strength in the present and future.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

Humility and hindsight are the guardrails of a new life.

Arrogance, self-confidence, and pride blind us to the very same pitfalls in front of us which have already tripped us before. Humility reveals our pathway before us by forcing us to look to God.

And while it is true that we must never fixate on our past mistakes, it is also true that we must never forget God's faithfulness. He has been faithful to us yesterday, He is faithful to us today, and He will be faithful to us tomorrow.

Video Description

Doomed to Repeat | Week 3 | “Humility And Hindsight”

TEXT: Deuteronomy 8

Today, as we continue our progress through Israel's story backward, we come upon another speech. This one, like last week, is presented by Moses. But instead of entering the promised land, as in Deut. 30; here, in Deut. 8, the Israelites had just finished the forty-year wanderings in the desert. And it was time for a review of what had just occurred.

Now, we talked briefly about this last week, but suffice to say, a journey which should've only taken four months turned into forty years because of unbelief. And Moses is now speaking to a generation who knows full-well about the perils of unbelief. They, themselves, had witnessed as their parents and grandparents dropped, one by one, in the wilderness simply because they didn't believe God. And, as Moses will tell them, a big part of why that generation failed to trust, obey, and believe God is because they lacked humility and hindsight.

Arrogance, self-confidence, and pride blind us to the very same pitfalls in front of us which have already tripped us before. Humility reveals our pathway before us by forcing us to look to God. And while it is true that we must never fixate on our past mistakes, it is also true that we must never forget God's faithfulness. He has been faithful to us yesterday, He is faithful to us today, and He will be faithful to us tomorrow.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

“Message in a Minute” Video Description