

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## ***“The Peril of Prosperity”***

DEUTERONOMY 8 - 11

### Introduction

The peril of prosperity is that we tend to forget the Lord. Warren Wiersbe wrote, **“Idolatry begins in the heart when gratitude to the Giver is replaced by greediness for the gifts.”**

God’s wilderness children were about to mature into Promised Land conquerors. In their conquest was the peril of prosperity. We’ll see God warn them by *reminding them of their failures*, and by *requiring they be faithful*.

The emphasis in the first twenty verses of Chapter Eight is on God’s Fatherly care of them as His dearly loved children as they wandered through the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:1 “Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers.

Deuteronomy 8:2 And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

How we respond to the tests of life reveals what’s really in our hearts, especially when those tests involve the everyday experience of life. The devil tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but God tests us to bring out the best in us. When God allows a difficult circumstance to test us, we will either *trust* Him and become more mature, or we will *tempt* Him and become more miserable.

Deuteronomy 8:3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

You can be alive but not living. You don’t live until you receive God’s Word into your heart and are born again.

One of the perils of prosperity is that it focuses so much on the material world, while we are essentially spiritual. Our greatest joys and pleasures are not material; they are spiritual.

Deuteronomy 8:4 Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.

God saw to their needs, as any good Father would for His children. Each morning during their wilderness journey, God sent the Jewish people manna to teach them to depend on Him for what they needed. Those who obeyed God in the daily responsibility of gathering manna would be inclined to obey the rest of His commandments.

Not only did God feed the Jews “miracle manna” each morning, but He also kept their clothes from wearing out and their feet from swelling. You remember, too, that God provided water. The three pressing questions of life for most people are, “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?” and the Lord met all these needs for His people for forty years.

This comment about their clothes is amazing... So, too, His care – to the point their feet never swelled, which I take to mean God kept them healthy all over.

Deuteronomy 8:5 You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.

Remember: They were being disciplined. Discipline – both instruction and correction – is a proof of parental love. And, even when God was disciplining them for forty years, He was caring for them, providing for them.

Deuteronomy 8:6 “Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

Deuteronomy 8:7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills;

Deuteronomy 8:8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;

Deuteronomy 8:9 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.

“The reference to *iron* and *copper* in the hills is remarkably exact. Ancient copper mines and smelters have been discovered in recent years in the Arabah below the Dead Sea, and geological survey has demonstrated the presence of ores of copper and iron in the nearby hills.” (Thompson)

It’s important to trust that God only, always wants what is best for you; otherwise, you’re tempted to take Him lightly, throwing-off what seem to be restraints that hinder you from making progress, or experiencing pleasure. You must trust that His spiritual blessings are best.

The Promised Land was about to be conquered by these children. Conquest would bring prosperity – a peril, if not you’re not prepared for it.

Deuteronomy 8:10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

Deuteronomy 8:11 “Beware that you **do not forget** the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,

Deuteronomy 8:12 lest - *when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*;

Deuteronomy 8:13 and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;

Deuteronomy 8:14 when your heart is lifted up, and you **forget** the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

Deuteronomy 8:15 who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;

Deuteronomy 8:16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end -

Deuteronomy 8:17 then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

Deuteronomy 8:18 “And you shall **remember** the Lord your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

Deuteronomy 8:19 Then it shall be, if you by any means **forget** the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

**Do not forget... Remember...** God wants to prosper you; **but it will destroy you if you forget He is the source.**

Deuteronomy 8:20 As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.

The Lord is going to use His children as conquerors to destroy wicked nations. But they must not forget the Lord.

Is there a way we can prepare for prosperity and deal with the danger? Yes; and we'll see it, beginning in verse six of Chapter Nine. First, in the opening five verses, God reiterates their status as conquerors.

Deuteronomy 9:1 "Hear, O Israel: You *are* to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven,

Deuteronomy 9:2 a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and *of whom* you heard *it said*, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?'

Deuteronomy 9:3 Therefore understand today that the Lord your God *is* He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the Lord has said to you.

They would be conquerors, and more than conquerors because of the Lord. You and I are described as more than conquerors:

Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

Romans 8:39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our conquests are more in the spiritual realm. It isn't cities we conquer, but character traits. We're not after the fruit of the land, but the fruit of the Spirit (love).

The peril of prosperity is no less real today than it was then. The formula for battling it is to have an honest estimate of our failures, and to remain faithful.

First, an estimate of failures:

Deuteronomy 9:4 “Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land’; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord is driving them out from before you.

Deuteronomy 9:5 *It is* not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart *that* you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It’s almost as if prosperity releases some kind of anti-spiritual hormone into your system that makes you feel as though you somehow earned or deserve God’s blessings. It’s so hard to keep this in perspective. Not only do we tend to think that way; the world tends to think that way, too – reinforcing our wrong thinking. So God listed their failures, as a nation. True, it’s the failures of their parents. But they should understand they are no different than their parents. These are the failures of their human nature; they were going to repeat them, if not kept in check.

Deuteronomy 9:6 Therefore understand that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.

From verse six of Chapter Nine, through verse eleven of Chapter Ten, their failures are recalled. Specifically, their failures at Mount Sinai, when they made and worshipped the Golden Calf; and their failure at Kadesh-Barnea, when they refused to enter the Promised Land.

Moses was addressing a new generation, but they needed to hear this part of the message and realize that they were sinners just like their ancestors. The theme is expressed bluntly in verse twenty-four of Chapter Nine, “*You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I [the Lord] knew you [chose you].*”

We have trouble getting a good handle on our failures. On the one hand are folks worried about self-esteem; on the other, there are those with a false humility, who tell you what awful sinners they are, but only because of some very minor infraction that makes them seem almost perfect. Perhaps the answer is to understand your

nature is corrupt; and, even after you are saved, your flesh remains, always ready to indulge itself in some excess. Thus, self-esteem is not an issue, because you are accurately esteeming yourself as a person born with a sin nature. And you realize you sin because you're a sinner. In other words, behind the façade of your seemingly minor infraction is a monster of flesh.

The review of Israel's sins is quite an indictment, but God **never** forsook the people of Israel and often forgave them when He should have judged them. "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10). God is always faithful to His promises; when we don't allow Him to rule, He will *overrule* and still accomplish His purposes. However, we will miss the blessings that He planned for us.

Beginning in verse twelve of Chapter Ten, God tells these failures they can nevertheless remain **faithful**. All they need to do is obey the Lord.

He gives them five incentives to obey. First, they should obey because God has **commanded** it:

Deuteronomy 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,  
Deuteronomy 10:13 *and* to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

Why obey the Lord? Because He has given commands, and He has commanded us to follow them! Hey, why wouldn't you obey the Lord? Doesn't He know more, know what is best?

Five key words expand on the word obey: **fear, walk, love, serve, and keep.**

Next, you should obey because of God's **character**:

Deuteronomy 10:14 Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it.  
Deuteronomy 10:15 The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.

Deuteronomy 10:16 Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

All males among Israel had to be circumcised eight days after they were born; but this was just a symbol for the real work of cutting away the flesh God desired - the work of taking our hearts inclined after the flesh and giving us hearts inclined after the spirit.

Why would God command them to do something that only He could do in them? To show them the need to have the inner transformation, and to compel them to seek Him for this inner work.

God's character is then described:

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the Lord your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.

Deuteronomy 10:18 He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 10:19 Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:20 You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.

Deuteronomy 10:21 He *is* your praise, and He *is* your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.

Deuteronomy 10:22 Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.

Next, you should obey because of God's **intervention**:

Deuteronomy 11:1 "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.

Deuteronomy 11:2 Know today that *I do not speak* with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the Lord your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm –

Remember: Only those above twenty years of age died for refusing to enter the Promised Land; and only men. There were many alive who had witnessed God's acts among them.

Moses gives three examples of God's intervention for them:

Deuteronomy 11:3 His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land;



Deuteronomy 11:4 what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and *how* the Lord has destroyed them to this day;

When they were backed-up against the Red Sea, and the Egyptian army was bearing down; God intervened.

Deuteronomy 11:5 what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place;

Talk about summary statements! Forty years of God intervening is covered.

Deuteronomy 11:6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their possession, in the midst of all Israel -

Deuteronomy 11:7 but your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did.

God also intervened when they had internal disputes – to keep them on the proper track, following the right leaders.

Finally, you should obey because of God's **covenant**:

Deuteronomy 11:8 "Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess,

Deuteronomy 11:9 and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which the Lord swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Deuteronomy 11:10 For the land which you go to possess *is* not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered *it* by foot, as a vegetable garden;

Deuteronomy 11:11 but the land which you cross over to possess *is* a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven,

Deuteronomy 11:12 a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God *are* always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

Deuteronomy 11:13 'And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,



Deuteronomy 11:14 then I will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.

Deuteronomy 11:15 And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.'

Deuteronomy 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,

Deuteronomy 11:17 lest the Lord's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.

The word **land** is repeated several times in this section. It is a reminder of God's covenant with Abraham, to give his descendants the land.

We have been given exceedingly great and precious promises. They are best enjoyed by obeying God.

In the remaining verses, Moses will once more warn them about the peril of prosperity. First, he reiterates the means for transmitting the knowledge of God from generation to generation:

Deuteronomy 11:18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 11:19 You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 11:20 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,

Deuteronomy 11:21 that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

You are once again charged to teach and train your children. Use every help available; but ultimately, it's your walk that is **taught** and **caught**.

Now the warning again:

Deuteronomy 11:22 "For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do - to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him -

Deuteronomy 11:23 then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.

Deuteronomy 11:24 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory.

Deuteronomy 11:25 No man shall be able to stand against you; the Lord your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.

Deuteronomy 11:26 "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse:

Deuteronomy 11:27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today;

Deuteronomy 11:28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

Deuteronomy 11:29 Now it shall be, when the Lord your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

Deuteronomy 11:30 Are they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh?

Deuteronomy 11:31 For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it.

Deuteronomy 11:32 And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.

It is important to recognize that we, in Jesus Christ, do not have an Old Covenant relationship with God. We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him (Galatians 3:10-14). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience, or even the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.

Prosperity can bring [blessing](#); or it can be a [curse](#). God wants to bless you. Just be careful of your walk when He does.

## Conclusion

This reminds us of what the Lord really wants from us - our love. We could give Him a hundred other things, but none of it really matters unless we give Him our love. As Jesus said to the Ephesian church

in Revelation 2:4: *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

We don't lose love; we leave it. But, if we leave love, we lose all.