

## Where We've Been

*Who We Are. Where We Are. Where We've Been. Where We're Going  
Selected Passages from Deuteronomy*

*Remember the former things of old, says the Lord. Remember them and do not forget them. For I am God, and there is no other. I am the Lord, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning. My purposes will stand.*

If you've dared to park your vehicle at the Orlando International Airport in order to catch your flight out of the state for any extended period of time, then you know from experience there is one thing you must do. That one thing is this: record precisely where you parked. I mean precisely. It's not enough to record the level and the row either. You must include the animal because the animal identifies the deck. If you get the level and row right, but don't include the pig, or the horse, or the Chupacabra, you are not just headed for one long day when you return home. The odds are great that you are still going to be looking for your vehicle when Jesus comes again in all His glory to separate the sheep from the goats, even at the Orlando International Airport.

Many times, in the Scriptures, we are implored to leave the past in the past. "One thing I do," Paul told the Philippians, is "forget what is behind" and "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me" (Philippians 3:13-14). Through His prophet Isaiah, the Lord told the nation of Judah to "remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. For, behold, I am doing a new thing (Is 43:18-19). Jesus, himself, tells us that "no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Well, people of God, I want to suggest to you this morning that while we are implored to leave the past in the past, we are not called to forget every single thing. In fact, there are some things that we are called never to forget. We are called never to forget where we've been. That's why when we try, it only makes where we've been more prominent in our hearts and minds.

Two weeks ago, we looked at who we are. We are a people who "devote themselves to the Apostle's Teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Last week, we looked at where we are. Like Jacob, we live in the present in light of the past with the future in mind. But today, I want to talk to you about what the Lord desires we never forget. For just as it behooves to remember where we parked at Orlando International Airport, it also behooves us to never forget where we've been. We are never instructed by God to forget: (1) The tests that defined us; (2) the provisions that sustained us; (3) the rebellion that almost ruined us; and (4) the grace that enabled us. And we will see all these things we are never called to forget in a book that was given to the people of God by Moses just before God gave them their greatest material blessing to date: the Promised Land. It's the Book of Deuteronomy. But before we do, pray with me.

### What We Are Never Called to Forget:

#### 1. The Tests that Defined Us (Deut. 8:2)

- **Grip Strengthener** – (1) For 6.99, I bought myself a grip strengthener on Amazon. It's a hand-held device shaped like an upside down "V" that's designed to build strength in your fingers, hands, and forearms. (2) The tests God subjected us to in the past work the same way. They were designed to produce strength where you need it. And that strength produces perseverance, completeness, and maturity (James 1:2-3).
- <sup>2</sup> *Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.*
- **Then** – (1) The Proscription – "Remember" – to recollect/to recall. (2) The Purpose - Israel was led by God into the wilderness for 40 years for 2 specific purposes: (i) to be humbled and (ii) to be tested. They were tests Israel didn't do a good job on either: "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us in the desert to die? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert! (Ex 14:11-12). (3) The Point – The purpose of the test was to reveal the nature of their hearts and whether they – in the test – would cling to the commands of God.
- **Now** – If you remember/recollect/recall your tests by God, you will be reminded that they had the same purpose in your life. You thought you had control of the situation only to find out from God that you didn't. That's how you learn humility. And in the situation, you latched on to Jesus and His Word because that was all you could do. That's how God reveals what was in your heart.
- **App** - <sup>7</sup> *These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Pet. 1:7).*

## 2. The Provisions that Sustained Us (Deut. 8:3)

- **Hudson Taylor:** (1) In his journal, Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, writes these words: “Our heavenly Father is a very experienced One. He knows very well that His children wake up with a good appetite every morning. He sustained 3 million Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years... For God’s work done in God’s will never lack God’s supply.”
- <sup>3</sup> *(Remember) he humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*
- **Then** – Now the prescription to remember moves from the test to why God tested them: (a) It Created a Need – It caused them to hunger; (b) It Created a Provision – God fed them with manna that fell from heaven. Manna only came from heaven twice in the Bible: here and when Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. For He is the bread of life; (c) It Created a Confession – Man does not live by bread alone. Jesus confesses this to the devil in his time of wilderness testing. Unlike the Israelites, he passed.
- **Now** – The way God makes provision for us hasn’t changed. Like the Israelites learned, He is the Bread of Life. Like the Widow of Zarephath learned, He is the oil in our lamp that keeps the flame burning. Like the Lepers learned, He is our restoration. Like the blind men learned, He is our sight. Like the disciples learned, He is our sustenance and guide. That’s what He’s doing now.
- **App** - *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19).*

## 3. The Rebellion that Almost Ruined Us (Deut. 9:7, 23-25)

- **The Most Important Items for Commercial Fisherman:** (1) A commercial fisherman who spends any significant length of time at sea will tell you that the most important items on the ship are not bait and tackle. (2) They are fruits and vegetables because prevent scurvy. (3) Rebelling against eating your fruits and vegetables will ruin you when you are out at sea. (4) Likewise, we are called to remember the times we were almost ruined.
- <sup>7</sup> *Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the Lord your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord. <sup>23</sup> And when the Lord sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, “Go up and take possession of the land I have given you.” But you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You did not trust him or obey him. <sup>24</sup> You have been rebellious against the Lord ever since I have known you. <sup>25</sup> I lay prostrate before the Lord those forty days and forty nights because the Lord had said he would destroy you.*
- **Then** – (1) Why the Rebelled – Verse 23 tells us the essence of their problem: they rebelled against the command of the Lord because the Israelites didn’t trust and obey him. (2) How they were Spared – Moses’ intercession. Had not Moses interceded for the Israelites, they would have been ruined.
- **Now** – When we recall the times we rebelled against the Lord, we will remember where our situation started to go awry as well. It started to spiral the moment when stopped trusting God and obeying Him. We will also notice that the reason we were not ruined also has to do with intercession. But not from Moses. Our intercession came from Jesus, our Great High Priest, who lives to make intercessions for His people.
- **App** - *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace (Eph 1:7).*

## 4. The Grace that Enabled Us (Deut. 32:7-9)

- **Golden Gate Bridge:** (1) During the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge, the work fell badly behind schedule because several workers had accidentally fallen from the scaffolding to their deaths. (2) So, they came up with a solution: a net to be hung under the bridge to catch any who fell. (3) Consequently, all the time that was lost to fear of falling was replaced with faith in the net. (4) We are never called to forget the net we landed in when he fell off the scaffolding in the past. It’s the net of the grace of God.
- <sup>7</sup> *Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. <sup>8</sup> When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. <sup>9</sup> For the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.*
- **Then** – (1) Grace has a History – The image in verse 7 is remembering the days of old and being reminded of God’s graceful acts in their history; graceful acts that passed from generation to generation. Grace was their safety net that moved them forward. (2) Grace has a Reason – “For the Lord’s portion is his people.”
- **Now** – The same call to remember and recall the gracious acts of God still applies to us today. We are called never to forget them. Pass them down from generation to generation. So that people will know that the Lord’s portion is his people.
- **App** - *I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done (Ps 143:5).* May we never forget either. Amen.