

April 2, 2017 by Steve Brandon

Annual Meeting Devotion



Annual Meeting Devotional Deuteronomy 6

In a very few moments, Ray Hook will come up to the pulpit and will share with us some of the details of our giving and our spending this past year at Rock Valley Bible Church. And in doing so, we all can face some difficulties. We can easily come to think that Ray's presentation is all about the numbers and not about the worship that is due to the Lord, our God.

So, before he comes, I want to spend a few moments preparing our hearts to hear what he has to say. To do so, I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy, chapter 6. Deuteronomy is a book that records the last sermons of Moses, just as the people of Israel were preparing to enter into the promised land. In this chapter are some of the most famous words in all of the Bible. Jesus called these words, "the greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:34-40). They begin in verse 4, ...

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This was a call of Israel, not simply to obey the LORD with their lives, but to go deeper into their hearts. It was a call to love God with all of your heart; to love God with all of your soul; to love God with all of your might. Indeed, this is the greatest of commandments.

And we could spend much time here this morning, looking at the love that God requires of us. And looking at the meditation that God requires of us. And looking at the teaching and reading that God requires of us. But, this morning, I want to look past these words. I want to focus upon verses 10 and following. Because, I think that they are pertinent to us this morning as we think about the ways that the LORD has provided for us. Verse 10, ...

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

"And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Moses knew the tendency of the human heart was to become absorbed with the physical blessings in life and to forget exactly who it is that gives the physical blessings, the LORD. This is the downfall of America. God has blessed our nation with material wealth, far beyond any nation that has ever existed in this history of our planet! We have more wealth than Israel ever did. More wealth than Babylon or Assyria or Greece or Rome or Russia or Germany or England or China. God has greatly blessed our country. And yet, what is happening to our country? We are systematically removing God from the public square. We are becoming more and more secular every day. Or, to put it bluntly, we have forgotten the Lord. We have forgotten that he is the one who has provided to us all of the wealth!

This was the fear of Moses when the people of Israel were soon to enter the land. They were soon to enter into the place that the Lord had promise to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob (verse 10). The book of Genesis records this promise over and over and over again: God would give them the land.

The next book of the Bible, Joshua, records how they actually conquered the land. They crossed the Jordan and conquered Jericho. Then they conquered Ai and Gilgal, splitting the land in two. Then, they conquered the land in the south. Then, they conquered the land in the north. And at the end of Joshua, we read that ...

Joshua 21:43-45

Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

Moses knew full well that they would conquer the land. And he knew what that they would find. Look again at Deuteronomy 6:

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

"And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full,

They would find incredible blessings given to them by the Lord. But, there was a danger. The danger was that they might forget the LORD. Look again at verse 12.

Deuteronomy 6:12

then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

When experiencing great blessings from the Lord, there is a danger to forget the Lord. It is easy to forget where it is that you have come from. Moses reminds the people that they came from Egypt where they were slaves. But God brought them out of Egypt by his mighty hand. And God wanted them never to forget what he had done for them. Look over at verse 20. Moses puts forth the scenario of generations to come.

Deuteronomy 6:20

"When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?'

Parents, I know that such questions often come to you. When your children get a little older, they begin to ask deeper questions. Why do we go to church? What is the meaning of this? Why do we do that? For the Hebrew father, he was to take his son upon his knee and say to his son, ...

Deuteronomy 6:21-25

..., 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.'

There is a spiritual parallel to this as well for us.

Ephesians 2:11-13

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

This is the gospel. This is what we, as a church, seek to center our focus upon. That before Christ came, we were in peril. We had no promise of the Messiah. We were strangers to those who had the promise—the Jews. We were without hope and without God in the world. But God, in his mercy, sent his Son, not only to the Jews, but to us Gentiles as well. He sent his Son to bring us into relationship with him! And we ought never to forget that. But oh, how easy it is to forget.

I wrote on my blog this week of "First World Problems." These are problems that come only to privileged individuals, who have no worries of food, shelter, or clothing. It's the owner of the yacht who bemoans the cost of upkeep. It's the Porsche owner who makes a fuss when a can of soda is spilled in the back seat of his car. It's those at their vacation home on the lake who complain of the sand that comes into the door from the beach. Those who complain in this way seem oblivious to their material wealth. They have a yacht! They have a nice car! They have a vacation home! They have things that most of the world could only dream of having. They really have no right to complain at all. And yet, they do. And yet, we do.

We have been incredibly blessed. That's why Psalm 103 tells us to forget not all his benefits to us! That God has given Jesus to us. And this morning, I want to apply this to our church as well. In a few moments, Ray is going to come and explain how incredibly blessed we are. That we, as a church, have a building. As a church, we have met our budget. We have a surplus.

Our challenge at Rock Valley Bible Church is to be faithful stewards of all that God has given to us. And for those of you who have come to Rock Valley Bible Church, in recent years, seeing this nice building, which we are working to make nicer and nicer all the time. You need to realize that seven years ago, we had no building. For those of you who have been around that long, it would do well for you to remind those what those days were like.

Now, we weren't slaves in Egypt, but without a building, our church faced some unique challenges. We had to set up every week. We had no place for mid-week meetings. We had no visible presence in the community, no resources to use in the blessings of the community, and a lack of future stability.

But now, God has given to us a building! And just like Israel who was given a land, their tendency was to forget God's blessing upon them. Their tendency would be to complain. When you forget the blessing, the tendency is to complain. Look at verse 16, ...

Deuteronomy 6:16

"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.

Do you remember the story? God had delivered the Jews out of slavery. And they were in the wilderness, on their way to the promised land. And things weren't going so well. They were hungry. They were thirsty. And rather than trusting in the Lord, they complained against him. They even wanted to return to slavery in Egypt, claiming that the slavery was better than the wanderings in the wilderness! Even after the plagues; even after the miracle of the cloud protecting them from the Egyptians; even after the Lord provided Manna from heaven, they still complained. You can read the whole story in Exodus 15-17.

And in light of the great ways in which the Lord has blessed us here at Rock Valley Bible Church, we have no right to complain. God has blessed us greatly. And as you listen to Ray tell us of the way that God has provided for us, I want for you to come with a heart of thanksgiving and worship.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 2, 2017 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
