

# THE SAFEGUARDS TO ASSURE OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD: HOW TO GUARD AGAINST FORGETTING GOD DEUTERONOMY 08:01–10

## *Introduction*

How many people forget God? How many ignore God? Neglect God? Reject God? How many atheists are there, people who say that God does not exist; therefore they seldom if ever think about God? How many agnostics are there, people who say God may or may not exist; therefore they, too, seldom if ever think about God? How many people attempt to push God out of their minds because they want to live in some sin? They want to live like they want, when they want, and not like God says.

How much time throughout the day do you personally think about God? Can it be said that you forget God? Measure yourself. How much time throughout the day do you spend in prayer, thinking about God and talking with Him? How much daily time do you spend reading and studying God's Holy Word, thinking about Him and what He has to say? How much time do you spend in witnessing and sharing Christ with others? Prayer, Bible study, and witnessing are three strong measuring rods to show how much thought you give to God. Do you forget God? Ignore, neglect God?

How can a person guard against forgetting God? This was the great concern of Moses as he stood preaching to the people. Remember, the Israelites were camped in the plain of Moab, close to the Jordan River, right across from the great city of Jericho. They were poised to enter the promised land. But before they entered, Moses was preparing them to lay claim to their inheritance. The success of their campaign depended upon their obedience to God. Moses had to prepare the people, warn them: they must continue to follow God and keep His holy commandments. If they were faithful and obedient, God would give them the promised land. He would guide and protect them, giving them victory over all the enemies who stood opposed to them. One preparation was the message of this sermon, a message that forcefully speaks to our hearts as well. This is the message that Moses now preaches: *The Safeguards to Assure Obedience to the Commandments of God: How to Guard Against Forgetting God*, Deuteronomy 8:1-20.

- I. Be careful! Observe! Obey every commandment of God (v. 1).
  - II. Remember God's guidance through the wilderness wanderings (vv. 2-6).
  - III. Praise the LORD for the promised land and its wonderful provision (vv. 7-10).
  - IV. Guard against forgetting God (vv. 11-20).
-

## **I. Deuteronomy 08:01 Obey Every Commandment of God**

How does a person guard against forgetting God?

Be careful! Observe! Follow! Obey every commandment of God. If a person obeys the commandments of God, his mind is set upon God. He is not forgetting God; rather, he is thinking about God, seeking to please and fulfil the will of God. If a person is concerned about the commandments of God, his mind and thoughts are upon God. He is meditating, fellowshiping and communing with God. The energy and drive of his heart is to know God personally and intimately. He gains this knowledge by living in the Word of God and by obeying the commandments of God. How then does a person guard against forgetting God? By obeying every commandment of God, every single commandment.

Now note the wonderful gifts promised to the person who obeys God. First, there is the gift of life. The person who places his life into the hands of God is looked after by God. God takes care of the person, guiding and protecting him throughout all of life. Therefore, when it is time for the person to go home to heaven, God takes him. His life is under the care of God until God is ready for him. His life is not cut short by sinful behaviour such as drugs, alcohol, gluttony, guilt and a host of other emotional and health problems caused by sinful behaviour. Nothing cuts his life short, for God looks after him, giving him every day he is supposed to live upon the earth.

Second, there is the increase in fruitfulness and in population growth. Common sense tells us that people who obey God's commandments will live longer and healthier lives. And people who live longer and healthier lives will probably bear more children. Keeping God's commandments means less adultery and divorce, less assault and murder, less stealing and bankruptcy, less lying and broken relationships, less gluttony and abuse of the body. All this means longer and healthier lives and the blessing of a larger number of children born out of fruitful lives before God.

Third, there is the gift of an inheritance in the promised land. The person who obeys God will enter and inherit the promised land.

**Thought 1.** How can we guard against forgetting God? Be careful! Observe! Follow! Obey every commandment of God! Obey every single commandment!

**Mat 7:21** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

**Rev 22:14** Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

**James 1:25** But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

**Deut 26:16** The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

**Josh 1:8** *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*

**Deut 5:29** *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

**Exo 19:5** *Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.*

## II. **Deuteronomy 08:02–06 Remember God’s Guidance Through the Wilderness Wanderings**

How does a person guard against forgetting God? Remember God’s guidance through the wilderness wanderings. The word *remember* (zakar) means to mark out, recognize, be mindful of, recount, record, bring to remembrance, consider, recall, remind, reflect on, review. It also has the idea of keeping or observing. That is, to remember something is to keep, observe, carry it out, do it. Standing there preaching to the people, Moses wanted them to remember God’s guidance through the wilderness wanderings. He wanted them to remember and trust God’s guidance as they looked forward to entering the promised land.

1. Remember that God humbled and tested you in the wilderness wanderings (v. 2). The desert was dry and hot, no doubt sometimes reaching temperatures over 100 degrees. Under such circumstances, perspiration flows freely, soaking a person’s clothes and dripping down his face into his eyes. Thirst then becomes a problem. Life and work become uncomfortable and sleep during hot nights almost impossible. There were also poisonous snakes, scorpions and other dangerous animals that required a constant watch for protection. There were few trees in the desert, little grass and no vineyards, vegetables or fish to eat in the desert. Life in the desert was hard and strenuous. The people often experienced...

- hunger
- pressure
- thirst
- tension
- heat exhaustion
- distress
- fatigue
- discouragement
- exhausting work
- danger
- strain
- disgust

Whatever a person would experience by living in the desert, the *second generation* of believers had experienced for forty years. But their parents — the *first generation* — had been condemned because of their sin, condemned to wander about in the desert until they had all died. (See notes, Num 14:1-45.) They were barred from ever entering the promised land. But not the children: the promised land was to be their inheritance. Now the children, the *second generation* of believers stand before Moses as he preaches. He reminds them that the oldest among them have wandered about and suffered the hardships of the desert for forty years. But through all the hard, strenuous times God had guided them. He had been humbling and testing them to prove their character, their obedience or disobedience. Would they fail like their

parents or would they follow and obey God? Would they complain, murmur, and grumble like their parents or would they praise God? Would they turn away from the promised land and suggest returning to Egypt like their parents or would they go forward and enter the promised land, laying claim to their inheritance? “God is humbling and testing you by these hard, difficult times. What is your decision?”

2. Remember God’s provision of food (v. 3). He provided *manna* for you, a bread-like substance that looked like resin or coriander seed. (See note, Exo 16:31-36.) He met your need of hunger. This He did to teach one great truth: man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. The point is clear: do not forget God like your fathers before you. Do not grumble and complain about having little or no food. But trust God and obey Him. Keep every word He has spoken. And God will give you the provision of food. He will meet your need of hunger.
3. Remember God’s provision of clothing and strength (v. 4). This is an astonishing statement: the clothes of the Israelites did not wear out and their feet did not swell during the forty years of wilderness wanderings. Obviously, this was a direct miracle of God. For believers down through the generations, the application would be that God would meet the necessities of life for His dear people. Whatever a believer needs, the Word of God declares that God will meet that need.
4. Remember God’s discipline in the wilderness wanderings (v. 5). Just as a father loves and corrects his child, so God loves and corrects you. When the Israelites went astray, God disciplined and corrected them time and time again. (See *The Ten Failures of Israel*, Num 14:22 for a list of the times that the Israelites failed God and God disciplined them.)
5. Remember God’s expectation: obedience (v. 6). Throughout all the wilderness wanderings, God expected His people to obey Him. He expects no less of you. You must, therefore, walk in His ways, fear and revere Him.

**Thought 1.** How can we guard against forgetting God? By remembering how God guides us through the wilderness wanderings of this life. God guides us through all the dry, desert experiences of life — through all the trials, tribulations and temptations of life.

- (1) God humbles and tests us through the trials and temptations of life. By helping us to conquer the hard and troublesome experiences, He strengthens us, makes us far stronger and more able to face difficult times in the future. He proves our character, whether we will obey or disobey Him.

**Luke 6:48** “He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on a rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house, but could not shake it, because it was well built.”

**1 Cor 3:13** His work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work.

**James 1:12** *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

**Psa 17:3** *Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.*

**Zec 13:9** *“This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’”*

**Mal 3:3** *He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.*

(2) God provides food, clothing and strength for us. All the necessities of life are promised to the genuine believer who obeys God.

**Mat 6:33** *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

**Phil 4:19** *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

**Exo 23:25** *Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

**Deut 29:9** *Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do.*

**Deut 30:9** *Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors.*

**1 Chr 22:13** *Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the LORD gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.*

**Psa 1:2-3** *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

**Psa 31:19** *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

**Psa 132:15** *I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor I will satisfy with food.*

**Mal 3:10** *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

(3) God disciplines us. This too will keep us from forgetting God. Just as a father loves and corrects his child, so God loves and corrects us.

**John 15:2** “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

**1 Cor 11:30-32** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

**Heb 12:5-6** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

**Deut 8:5** Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

**Psa 94:12** Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.

**Prov 3:11-12** My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

(4) God expects obedience from us. If we profess to know God, we must obey Him. We must revere Him, follow after Him and walk in His ways.

**Rom 6:4-5** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

**Eph 4:1** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

**Eph 5:2** And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Eph 5:15-16** Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise.

**Gal 5:16** So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

**Col 2:6** So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him.

**1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

**1 John 2:6** Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

### **III. Deuteronomy 08:07–10 Praise the LORD for the Promised Land and its Wonderful Provision**

How does a person guard against forgetting God? By praising the LORD for the promised land and its wonderful provisions. All the hopes of the Israelites were wrapped up in the

promised land. Camped by the River Jordan, many an Israelite spent an evening walking along the shores of the Jordan, looking over into the promised land and longing for the day when they would receive their inheritance. Possessing the promised land was the longing and ache of their hearts. Moses knew this. He also knew that as long as the hope stayed alive, the people would remember God. They would obey Him and follow Him. With fire burning in his heart, he preached to the people, challenging them to praise the LORD for the promised land and its wonderful provisions.

1. Moses describes the great provision of the promised land (vv. 7-9). Note that he calls it a “good land.” It is a land that has everything to meet man’s need, a land that will provide a full and fulfilling life for man.
  - a. It has an overflowing water supply: brooks or streams, fountains and pools of water, with springs flowing throughout valleys and hills. In contrast to the desert experience, the people will have a full supply of water for themselves, their livestock and their crops.
  - b. It has an abundance of food (v. 8). The land is fertile and productive, a land with wheat and barley, fig trees and pomegranates, olives and honey — anything and everything that a person could ever want for food.
  - c. It is a land that has no scarcity, no insufficiency, no deficiency — nothing is in short supply. The people will lack nothing in the promised land.
  - d. It has a rich deposit of minerals (v. 9). Note that iron and copper in particular are mentioned. The note in the NIV says this:

*The mountains of southern Lebanon and the regions east of the Sea of Galilee and south of the Dead Sea contain iron. Both copper and iron were plentiful in the part of the Arabah south of the Dead Sea. Some of the copper mines date to the time of Solomon and earlier. Zarethan was a centre for bronze works in Solomon’s time (1 Kng 7:45-46). Some bronze objects from this site precede the Solomonic period, and today there are copper works at Timnah in the Negev. (NIV Study Bible. (Grand Rapids. MI: Zondcrvan Bible Publishers, 1985), p. 256, note on Deut 8:9).*

*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary says this:*

*The iron (v. 9) was probably that in southern Lebanon, in the mountains of Transjordan, and, perhaps, in the Arabah south of the Dead Sea. The basalt of the volcanic region east of the Lake of Galilee was 20 percent iron.*

*The copper mines of Solomon at Ezion Geber are well known. Werner Keller (The Bible as History [New York: Morrow. 1956], pp. 123-25) gives a dramatic description of the discovery in Sinai of ancient Egyptian copper and turquoise mines. See also Baly, pp. 98, 212, 215. (Frank E. Gaebelein, Editor. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. Vol. 2. p. 75).*

2. Moses gives a strong charge to the people: always praise the LORD for the promised land and its wonderful provision. Remember the source of your prosperity in the land,

God Himself. He is to be praised for the gift of the land and its abundant supplies. Thanksgiving is due Him. Without God, there would be no promised land and no abundant supply of provisions. So praise and give thanks to Him.

**Thought 1.** How can we guard against forgetting God? By praising the LORD for the promised land of heaven and the wonderful provisions of life. We should always be praising God and giving thanks to Him, for everything we have is from Him. God is the source of all our prosperity: the source of the overflowing water supply of the earth, the abundance of vegetation and food, the rich deposit of minerals. Praise is due God for all His wonderful provisions.

**Heb 13:15** *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

**1 Pet 2:9** *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

**Col 1:12** *Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

**Col 3:15** *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

**1 Th 5:18** *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

**Deut 8:10** *When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.*

**Psa 9:11** *Sing praises to the LORD, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.*

**Psa 33:2** *Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.*

**Psa 35:28** *My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.*

**Psa 67:3** *May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.*

**Psa 100:4** *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*

**Psa 107:22** *Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.*

**Isa 42:12** *Let them give glory to the LORD, and proclaim his praise in the islands. ■*