

THE LORD'S LEADING
Deuteronomy 8:2

Intro: The book of Deuteronomy is really a book of sermons which were delivered by Moses within perhaps as few as four weeks before his death. They are divided like this:

- 1) The first: chapters 1-4.
- 2) The second: chapters 5-26.
- 3) The third: chapters 27-30.
- 4) The fourth: chapters 31-33.

Chapter 34 gives us the account of Moses' death and burial.

In these messages Moses was doing two things:

- 1) He was looking backwards over their journey from Egypt to the border of the land of Canaan.
- 2) He was looking forward to their possession of the land of Canaan.

He had been with them for the first; he would not be with them for the second.

Deut. 8:2 has to do with both of these directions, as we shall see in examining the verse, and there are several wonderful truths which Moses brought out in this verse that can be a blessing and very helpful to us even today.

First of all, Moses was emphasizing a truth of great comfort for the people of God in every generation:

I. IT IS A TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE THAT THE LORD LEADS.

Moses was concerned about the last 40 years, but we can see the leading of the Lord all through the book of Genesis, even bringing the people down to Egypt. And we can see the Lord's leading through the remainder of the OT. The Lord does lead!

And will you note that the Lord leads?

Moses did not take the credit for himself. Earlier he had asked his father-in-law to come with them, to guide them, but he did not give the credit to him. Angels had their part. Even the enemies of the Lord had had a part, forcing the Israelites to go around their lands in some instances. But Moses attributed it all to the Lord.

Leading includes providing, protecting. It meant that the presence of the Lord was with them wherever they went. HE was always there. They could not have done what they did without Him.

Note this emphasis in Psalms 23 and in Isaiah 58:11.

A second thing to note in our text is:

II. THE LORD GUIDES HIS PEOPLE.

It is true that the providence of God can be seen in the affairs of all of the nations of the earth, and that nothing happens outside of God's sovereign plan. But it is just as true that no people can lay claim to the guidance of the Lord like the people of God can. No nation experienced what the children of Israel experienced. The Egyptians learned that the hard way. All through the Word of God the acts of God's guidance and the promises of guidance have to do with the people of God.

We have many reasons for rejoicing that we are the people of God, but this is certainly one of the greatest of all reasons. What a difference it would make if we were left to ourselves!

And this guidance is personal as well as corporate.

But let us look at our text again. We also see that

III. THE LORD CONTINUALLY LEADS HIS PEOPLE.

Moses spoke of "these forty years." What kind of years were they? Why did it take forty years? Would you say that they were forty years of obedience, or of disobedience?

We often hear it said that the Lord will guide us if we will let Him--that He will guide us if we really want to do His will. What do those forty years teach us?

They were years of disobedience. They were years of rebellion--one after another! They were years when they were continually longing for their days in Egypt. They were years of unbelief. We would have to say that they were among the worst years of Israel's history!

But what about the guidance of the Lord?

It never stopped! The Lord did not forsake His people. He had to judge them a number of times. In fact, it took forty years to make the trip because a whole generation fell under the judgment of God. But God did not forsake them. That time was a perfect illustration of what Paul wrote to Timothy years later in 2 Tim. 2:13,

If we believe not,
yet he abideth faithful:
he cannot deny himself.

The grace of God was certainly evident during all of this time. Let us be careful about setting up arbitrary conditions with respect to God's guidance. Of course the bless-

ing of God will be greater if we are walking with the Lord, but never let it be said that the Lord deserts His people when they are disobedient toward Him.

Read Exodus through Deuteronomy again if you need to be convinced on this point.

But let me mention a fourth point:

IV. THE LORD ALWAYS LEADS WITH A PURPOSE.

The Israelites did not always like their circumstances, but instead of seeing the hand of God in them (their circumstances), they would blame Moses.

And they had not gone very far on their journey before they felt they were facing disaster. That was when they got to the Red Sea.

And then remember how they were continually worried about water, and about food. It would be helpful for all of us to go back over those four books of Moses thinking of the guiding hand of God, and the way in which the people were continually in rebellion.

But notice what our text says. What was the Lord doing in those times of testing? The way was not always immediately clear. The obstacles were not always immediately removed. No. The Lord was testing them to see "whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no."

The question always is, Do we really want to do the Lord's will? Will we wait until He really shows us what we ought to do? And when He shows it to us, will we do it--joyfully, immediately, and in faith?

He has promised that He will always guide us. There is never any question about that. But will we wait until He shows us His will, or do we start to guess, and then run ahead without clear guidance as to what His will is?

There is probably no time when our relationship to the Lord is being tested any more than when we are waiting upon the Lord to show us what we should do.

Time after time Israel failed. And time after time the Lord was putting the pieces together again. We need to keep in our minds that when the Lord says, "Wait," when His will is not clear, it is our obedience that is being put to the test.

But I have one more point--the first thing mentioned in the verse. Notice how the verse begins:

V. "THOU SHALT REMEMBER . . ."

All that we have been talking about thus far has had to do with the Lord; now we come to the part that the Israelites had--and what they were to do.

This must have been a painful experience--to remember. It must have been painful for Moses himself. After all, he was not going to be able to go into the land because of His own failure to follow the guidance the Lord gave to him.

Why not take this verse as having been written specifically about your life, or about my life? What would your spiritual biography look like? Would you enjoy reading and remembering? How many times, and in how many ways have you failed the Lord, have I failed Him?

It is delightful to remember the Lord like we did this morning. Perhaps it is hard to realize that the Lord had to go through what He did in order to redeem us from our sins, but to meditate, to remember, His work, is a delight.

But it is different with us, isn't it?

Why do you think that the Lord told the children of Israel to do this?

Let me suggest some reasons. And I want all of us to see how they apply to us.

- A. It would bring them back again and again to read the Word of God--the books of Moses.
- B. It would cause them to praise God for His grace, and to see that the ultimate outcome of their journeying was a testimony to the goodness, the faithfulness, and the power of God.
- C. Hopefully, it would keep them from committing the same sins all over again. This is the reason the Lord lets us remember what He forgets, while we often forget what He remembers. It would make the people realize how much they needed to trust to the Lord, and to trust Him even when they could not see the reason for it.
- D. It would make them humble and gracious in their dealings with others when others failed the Lord.

Concl: Why not remember this verse, and do what Moses told the children of Israel to do? It will make you love the Lord even more, and it will make you realize more than ever that you would never have made it to wherever you are if God had not been guiding and blessing all of the way.