

# Deuteronomy 8:17-20

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-8/deuteronomy-817-20/>

*God's objective in disciplining and training Israel was for their good. God was seeking their best interest. Now Moses warns Israel against the danger of not listening to the voice of their Suzerain (Ruler) God, the one from whom all blessings flow. Doing so would inevitably bring divine judgment on Israel, just as the original inhabitants of Canaan.*

This section expands on the previous one by stressing once again God's initiative in His covenant relationship with Israel. The Suzerain God redeemed Israel out of bondage in Egypt, led them through the wilderness, and fed them manna when they were hungry in the wilderness. God's purpose was to humble Israel and test them, *to do good* for them *in the end* (vv. 11-16). *In the end* is another way to say "as an objective." God had a particular purpose for Israel in all he led them through in the *great and terrible wilderness*, and that goal was *to do good* for them.

*Otherwise*, had God not trained them through the difficulty, the Israelites *might say* in their *heart*, *my power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth*. Their *heart would become proud*. Pride leads to all sorts of societal evils. God desires His people to prosper, and they will do so by listening and obeying Him.

The term *wealth* includes goods, land, strength (political and economic), energy, and status. The Israelites who were once incapable of doing anything to sustain themselves would soon think that their own *power and the strength* of their *hand* — not the limitless power of the Suzerain God — had made them prosperous. For this reason, Moses reminded the people that every gift comes from God. He exhorted them to *remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth*. Making *wealth* requires *power*. Energy. And God is the source of *power*. It is interesting to note that it is not the *wealth* that is the potential problem. It is the attitude. *Wealth* with humility is a great blessing, and *wealth* and *power* mixed with pride is a great evil. The means to retain humility is to *remember* that it is *the LORD who is giving power to make wealth*.

God *granted power to make wealth* to Israel for a special purpose: *that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day*. Israel's *wealth* was a confirmation of the covenant promises which God *swore to their fathers* ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). The phrase *as it is this day* seems to emphasize the active nature of God's promise to their *fathers*. Even though God's promise was made roughly 500 years prior, it was still very much alive *this day*.

Moses has already exhorted Israel not to forget their God. Israel's wealth (wisdom, *power*, imagination, material resources, skills, and strength) was a direct blessing from God, Moses encouraged them to not *forget the LORD their God*. This sinful act could lead to the worst kind of disaster. When the LORD does not have priority in someone's life, Moses warned, it would become easy to *go after other gods and serve them and worship them*. Doing so would be to violate the first commandment, which states, "You shall have no other gods before Me" ([Exodus 20:3](#); [Deuteronomy 5:7](#)). The Israelites would *surely perish* because they would behave just like the Canaanites. As Moses said, *I testify against you today that you will surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish*. Sadly, this is exactly what transpired later in Israel's history; they *perish* from the land, and are exiled. And many die. Israel is God's chosen people, and always will be. That does not change ([Romans 11:25-29](#)). God will never reject them. But His people have responsibility, and get rewarded for their choices. If they walk in obedience, they will *blessed above all peoples* ([Deut 7:14](#)). But if they disobey, turn to pride and idolatry, they will *perish*. This principle flows throughout the Bible, that God's acceptance is freely given, but approval and reward requires obedience. The Apostle Paul conveys this principle to his disciples throughout his letters (see examples in [Romans 14:10-11](#); [1 Cor 3:5-15](#); [2 Cor 5:10](#)).

The Suzerain God chose Israel *among all the peoples* to be His *own possession* ([Exodus 19:5](#)). His choice was not based upon Israel's merits. Rather, God's choice was an act of divine grace. As God's people, the Israelites were given the promises of God. However, obedience was necessary to possess and enjoy the blessings. Failure to obey would result in curses, which could be in the form of death or removal from the land. Like the Canaanite nations that the LORD expelled from the land, Israel would *perish* if they *would not listen to the voice of the LORD their God*; that is, to obey all His commandments. Observing God's commandments is synonymous to listening to His voice. This is the way by which Israel could enjoy the blessings of their Suzerain (Ruler) God.

## **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' <sup>18</sup> But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day. <sup>19</sup> It shall come about if you ever forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. <sup>20</sup> Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the Lord your God.**