

Perils of Prosperity

I. Announce:

A. Slide#1 This Week @ CM:

1. Good Friday Communion service at 7:00 am
2. Crosswalk at 11:00 am meet at Temeku Theater
3. Pick up *Hope cards* (Easter Service invitations) at Sound Booth.
4. Easter Sunday Service at 7:30 am

B. H.S./C.C. Drivers needed for Midnight Broomball on Fri. 4/25, contact Andrew P. or Andrew L.

II. Intro:

A. Slide#2 *Remember the Alamo* was *a battle cry* in which the bitterness of the Texans over the massacres by Mexican forces at the Alamo in San Antonio found expression, on March 6, 1836.

1. People worldwide continue to *remember the Alamo* as a heroic struggle against impossible odds (200 vs. 1500).
2. *The children in the wilderness* also just went through *a heroic struggle against impossible odds*. By trusting in God the last 40 years. *Remember!*

B. How's your memory? - I have an incredible memory for names ever since I took that *Sam Carnegie* course. Or was it *Dale*?

1. I love the story of the man who went to a *memory improvement seminar* and was excited about what he learned. A friend asked him what the name of the seminar was. "What's that flower in the garden, long stems, thorns, bright red..." "Oh, you must mean a *rose*?" "Yeah, that's right. *Rose*, what was the name of that seminar I went to?"
2. Slide#3 Moses gives the children of Israel 2 things to Remember...Outline:
Remember the Wilderness - Remember your God. Remember(2) Do not forget(11).
 - a) Its a warning against their *Independence*/self rule/autonomy/freedom...*from God*.
 - b) Slide#4 Title: *Perils of Prosperity*

III. Slide#5 REMEMBER THE WILDERNESS (1-6)

A. For Israel there was always a **connection** between obeying God's commands & their receiving His blessing in the Promised Land.

1. To help them connect the dots, Moses emphasizes the goodness of God's provision during their wilderness wanderings & of the goodness of the land which He was about to provide.

B. Slide#6 (2b) Moses was using an **anthropomorphism** (attributing human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, object)

1. God, of course, *already knew* what was *in their hearts*. The point is that their *obedience or disobedience had to be proven in history*.
- C. **Slide#7** (3) [God] fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.
1. He gave them *manna* - an *utterly un-heard-of food* falling from heaven. *Why?*
 - a) So that they would learn to live on everything that comes from the mouth of God.
 - b) *How does miraculous manna teach that?* Because manna is one of the incredible ways God can, with a mere word, **reveal himself** and **meet your needs** when all else looks hopeless.
 - c) God led them into the desert where they had no alternative but to **trust Him** or to **murmur against Him**. *In the desert* they could not produce their own food **but** had to depend on God for food and thus for their very lives. When Moses reminded them that **Slide#8** they did not live on bread alone *he meant* that **even their food was decreed by the word of God**. They had manna because *it came by His command*. *It was therefore* ultimately **not bread** that kept them alive **but His word!** "Bread alone," that is, bread acquired *independently* of His word, could not keep them alive.
 2. **Slide#9** But watch what Satan does with this in **Mt.4:1-4**.
 - a) Satan says to Jesus, **"If you are the Son of God, turn this stone to bread."**
 - (1) Someone asked, **"Why is it opportunity knocks only once, yet Temptation bangs on the door constantly?"**
 - b) *In other words, "Do the manna thing. Make manna like you did in the wilderness. If the point of manna in the wilderness was to teach the people to expect miracles in distress, then treat yourself to some miracle bread, and you will be obeying Scripture."*
 3. And Jesus responds, "You are so close and yet so far. You have always handled the Word of God that way, so subtle. You sound like you approve God's Word, but you turn every word against him. The point is this Satan: **Don't trust in bread - not even miracle bread - trust in God**.
 - a) Don't get your deepest satisfactions in life from food - not even God-wrought miracle food - but from God. *Every word that comes out of the mouth of God reveals God*. And it is this self-revelation that we feed on. *This will last forever. This is eternal life*.
 - b) Begone, Satan, *God is my portion*. I will not turn from His path and His fellowship, **not even for miraculous manna.**"¹ *[or miracle bread, or miracle whip]*
- D. **Slide#10** Note comparisons:
1. **The Lord your God led you all the way these 40 yrs in the wilderness.** Dt.8:2
 2. **Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness.** Mt.4:1

¹ John Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/man-shall-not-live-on-bread-alone>

3. The Lord your God led you all the way these **40 yrs** in the wilderness. Dt.8:2
 4. He had fasted **forty days and forty nights**. Mt.4:2
 5. To **test** you, to know what was in your heart. Dt.8:2
 6. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted**/tested. Mt.4:2
 7. So He humbled you, allowed you to **hunger**. Dt.8:3
 8. And when He had fasted 40 days & 40 nights, afterward He was **hungry**. Mt.4:2
 - a) In both cases God was **delivering His people**. In both cases God sent a new Joshua to lead & represent His people. In both cases God was delivering His people into a **Promised Land**.
 9. **Poem**: The Battle
 - a) **Satan**: Turn this rock into a **roll**. **Jesus**: All these rocks wouldn't make me **full**.
 - b) **Satan**: Make these stones into some **scones**. **Jesus**: Not even if I were **skin-n-Bones**.
Ya see I have food my Foe, of which you don't Know. And to change even a **pebble**, would make me a **rebel**.
 - c) **Satan**: Strike **one...but I've just begun**.
 10. **Slide#11 Anatoli Shcharansky**, a dissident Soviet Jew, kissed his wife goodbye as she left Russia for freedom in Israel. His parting words to her were, "I'll see you soon in Jerusalem." But Anatoli was detained and finally imprisoned. Their reunion in Jerusalem would not only be postponed, it might never occur. During long years in Russian prisons and work camps Anatoli was stripped of his personal belongings. His only possession was a miniature copy of **the Psalms**. Once during his imprisonment, his refusal to release the book to the authorities cost him 130 days in solitary confinement.
Finally, twelve years after parting with his wife, he was offered freedom. In February 1986, as the world watched, Shcharansky was allowed to walk away from Russian guards toward those who would take him to Jerusalem. But in the final moments of captivity, the guards tried again to confiscate the **Psalms** book. Anatoli threw himself face down in the snow and refused to walk on to freedom without it. **Those words** had kept him alive during imprisonment. He would not go on to freedom without them.²
- E. **Slide#12 Discipline** (5)
- F. God's goodness is also shown through His disciplining them, like a father a son.
- G. He also showed them their **dependence** still needed to be on **Him alone**, as He already lead them through a land **without** adequate food or water, where they could **not** possibly survive through their own efforts alone.
1. God let Israel **suffer hunger, thirst, & want**, then **supplied** their physical needs so they would know emphatically He is their provider.

² From Discipleship Journal, Issue #43 (1988), p. 24

2. He also did this so they would not be **spoiled** by the **ease** which comes from **self-sufficiency**.
3. They needed to know material possessions & wealth **come from God**, **before** they entered their Promised Land.

IV. Slide#13 **REMEMBER YOUR GOD (7-20)**

A. Slide#14a **You will lack nothing**

- B. The land which they were now about to enter...**lacked nothing**. (9)
 1. Ample water(7). **7 life sustaining food sources**(8). Mineral resources(9b).
 - a) These **7** they are still known for today.
 - b) They have both **iron & copper** in the south.
- C. Then you shall **bless God** because of these blessings. **Or at least they should**.
- D. (11) But you might forget the lessons the wilderness taught you & somehow credit yourselves for your life of ease.
 1. **Who needs to trust in God when life is going well? :(**

E. Slide#14b **The Perils of Prosperity** (10-14)

F. How few people can stand success & prosperity, & handle it in a humble way.

G. Slide#15 **Affluence** is *not* inherently **evil**, it **is** inherently **dangerous**.

1. Slide#16 **Israel's greatest treasure isn't silver & gold, but the memory of a time of poverty that demonstrated God's love & their dependence on Him.**
 - a) Remember the peanut-butter & jelly years? (early married years)
Remember the Great Depression? (my dads *Great Depression* memories)
Remember 9-11? The Great Recession of 2008? The Global Recession of 2009?
2. Slide#17 **Moses prescribed a sure antidote for this danger: *bless/praise the Lord your God*.**
 - a) In fact **failure to praise Him** for His blessings was a step toward **forgetting God** and then **disobeying** His commands.
3. In times of prosperity it is easy to forget the **true source** of blessing & even assume that **life's good things** are the result of **our own effort** & the reward of **our merit**.
 - a) James 1:17 NIV **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**