

God's Chosen People Have Forgotten Him

by Bob Jones III

The sermon emphasizes the importance of tugging upon God, thinking upon Him, and centering our thoughts on Him to avoid forgetfulness and maintain a vital relationship with God.

Duration: 31:40

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:18, Deuteronomy 32:20, Psalm 63:1, Psalm 63:3, Jeremiah 18:17-18, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Forgetting God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of remembering and acknowledging God in our lives. He warns against becoming complacent and forgetting the source of our blessings. The speaker uses the analogy of clay and the potter to illustrate our dependence on God. He also highlights the challenge of maintaining a strong relationship with God in a fast-paced and worldly society. The sermon encourages listeners to actively seek and prioritize their connection with God in their daily lives.

Transcript

And I would just like to say one more word before I preach, and that is, you folks have been greatly in our prayers. Your pastors have been greatly in our prayers in recent weeks. I hope in the midst of what God has done, you are living in a land now of peace and gladness.

This is the day that for forty-five, fifty years, many of you have prayed for, and God has granted your prayers. Let us not forget that when God answers our prayers, that it is a miracle from heaven. What has happened in your land is, in our estimation from across the waters, a miracle of God.

Principle was maintained. Honor, peace in honor. There is no other kind of peace worth having.

If capitulation is the price, it is not really peace. It is slavery. It is subjection.

Peace with honor. God has granted it. Let us give Him thanks for what He has done, and recognize His great hand, and give thanks for the instrument that God has used to bring all of this about.

And let us tell our children and our grandchildren that we saw God at work in our land. We have seen God answer prayer. And let us be glad of it.

Shall we pray together? Father, in these few minutes together, now help me to be Your servant. And I pray that Your Word would do us good, in Jesus' name, Amen. Please keep your Scriptures open to

Deuteronomy 32, and also put a marker in Psalm 63.

We'll look at that just very briefly in closing. This passage that was read in our hearing this morning is a remarkable and frightening portion of the Scripture to me. God said to His people Israel, I've chosen you from all the people of the earth.

I've privileged you to bear My name, to be My servant. Not only did I give you the calling, I gave you everything you needed to fulfill the calling. I gave you oil and honey out of the rock.

I blessed you with food and butter and fields of abundance. Speaking in terms here we can understand of the blessings of God. God said, I've given you blessings that have made you fat.

But He said that became your problem. Your fatness became your problem. Even as fatness becomes our problem and brings us to ill health, does it not? And the doctor, the first thing he says to us when he gives us a checkup, you must lose some weight or you're going to be very sick.

These people got very sick. The blessings of God spoiled them. They got fat, but then they forgot the God who gave them the blessings.

And it's so easy to happen to us. This is the most instructive and frightening passage to me. Look at verse 18.

Of the rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful. What does he say? You have forgotten to think about God. You are unmindful of God who gave you all of this.

You have forgotten God that formed thee. Does the clay have any ability to know the potter in whose hands it abides? Absolutely not. Does the watch have any ability to know the watchmaker with great skills who puts that instrument, that timepiece together? Absolutely not.

But you and I have the ability to know the God who created us and who through Calvary recreated us. But it is absolutely possible for us to also willingly and knowingly neglect Him and abandon Him. Oh, we still come to church.

We don't slam the door publicly against Him. But in our hearts, all that we do, even in prayer and in worship, it's a form, it's a thing that we have accustomed, been accustomed to do. But it's done with indifference toward God because our heart isn't in it.

Does God not know when we ignore Him? Of course He does, just as you and I know. If we're in the company of someone who has scorned us, who resents our presence, we know it. And so God knows it when we become indifferent and resentful of His presence.

The problem here in this passage is that they became unmindful of God. They didn't think upon God. I've entitled this message, Tug, T-U-G, Tug or Perish, and that's exactly what God was telling them here they must do.

The believer's greatest challenge in life, when that believer has walked with God for years, our greatest challenge becomes the continuance of thinking upon God, tugging upon God, think upon God. Tug, think upon God. Tug.

I had a note from one of our graduates recently. He had some thoughts along this line. Listen to what he said.

As far as my greatest adjustment after graduating, I had not anticipated, I would have to say, it would be the amount of effort and desire it takes to walk with God in the fast-paced business world. At the university I was very, very busy, but because of the structure, spiritual food was abundant and almost forced upon us. Now it is the complete opposite.

Spiritual food is very scarce, and you have to exert significant force to obtain it. The world makes walking with God very, very hard. Isn't that true for all of us? Don't we know that to be true? Don't we know that the world leeches out of us a yearning for God and makes us yearn for the satisfactions and the rewards that come from our labors and our investment in our families and in everything around us that occupies our time, and so God goes back into the recesses of our thoughts and our minds, and it takes force to pull us back to God, to tug upon God again, to pull God into our daily life.

This is the Lord's Day. This is a day of giving of our life to God. But what about the other six days of the week? We have to tug, to think upon God, to pull Him into our daily life.

The condition that is described here in this passage is that God was not in their thoughts. Ladies and gentlemen, do we not become like what we think upon? There was a book written called *The Servant*. It had this to say.

It was a book on leadership. When we human beings make a commitment to focus attention, time, and effort or other resources on someone or something, over time we begin to develop feelings for the object of our attention. What we pay attention to, spend our time with, or serve, we become attached to.

That's why many of us, many people, become servants or slaves to money because it's what we think upon. Or any other thing. Even legitimate things become idols to us because they are the objects of our thoughts, of our attention.

For some it might be hobbies. For some it might be books. For some it might be the cares of a household.

All of these things, necessary things, good things in their own right, but they keep us from thinking upon God. This is not to say we must become monastics. I am not promoting that in any way, but I am just saying in our daily routine of life, going about the necessary things of living, it is very easy for us not to tug, to think upon God.

Jeremiah 2.32 puts it this way, Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. My people, God says, have forgotten me days without number. The cause, there are many reasons why we don't tug, why we don't think upon God.

Pride is one of them. Psalm 10, verse 4, The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts.

Not in the prideful man's thoughts. Why? Because he is thinking of the pride of his countenance, the impression he is making upon others. That is where his thoughts are.

Number one, thoughts upon himself and how others are perceiving him. No time to think upon God when we are thinking upon ourselves. Israel became self-satisfied here with God and walked away from God.

Forsook Him, the Bible says in verse 15. If Israel here had forsaken God, that is indication that there was a time when Israel walked with God and by choice walked away from God. Made a choice to turn away.

It was a matter of choice. Somebody said there are only two things that we have to do in life, pay taxes and die. But I don't believe that is quite true.

I think it is pay taxes and make choices and die. We have a third choice to make. Each of us making our choices bears the consequences of those choices.

The choice to think upon God brings a certain characteristic and quality of life and character that makes that life entirely different than the life that thinks upon self in its pride, thinks upon self. How can I get a better deal out of life? How can I be more popular? How can I obtain my goals? In the pride of our countenance we think of self and not of God. My friends, there is refreshment, there is serenity, there is purity in life for those who think upon God.

Tug. There is the tug of pride to pull us one way. There is the tug of God to pull us another.

We are the product of what we put into our thoughts. And the wicked through the pride of his countenance finds God not in all his thoughts. How wonderful it is, how refreshing it is when you go about life and you find people who are tugging.

I remember sitting in the Lima, Peru airport a while back. As I looked across the people there at the gate waiting to get on the airplane, I saw a man devouring the Scriptures. And I thought, how wonderful.

I remember that my wife and I were standing in a ticket line at an airport recently in New York and had a power outage for 24 hours without electricity. All the transportation system was in chaos and people were scrambling to try to find other flights and rebook to get wherever they needed to go. We were standing in this line waiting our turn and behind me I noticed a man was standing there very tranquilly, he was reading his Bible.

And I turned to him and I said, Sir, I'm so happy to see you with the Scriptures in your hands. Do you enjoy reading the Bible? Oh, he said, I read the Bible all the time. I'm a Christian.

I said, well, I am too. I said, where have you been? He said, I've been on a mission trip. I'm a medical doctor and I've given two weeks in some country.

I forget where he said he was. I've been tending to people's physical needs and their spiritual needs and I'm trying to get home. And I'm just here reading the Bible while I'm standing in line waiting my turn.

I said, well, God bless you, sir. It's wonderful to see you tugging. I remember down in South America, my wife and I went up high into the Andes Mountains to the place called Machu Picchu, which was a 16th century city of some kind.

I really don't know what it was. It was in beautiful ruin and untouched by Pizarro and the Spanish conquistadors. Nobody knows what this city was, but it was pretty much intact.

And we were visiting there. And down in the valley below, there was a city, Agua Caliente. And in this little city by this roiling river, the Aguas Calientes River, there were some little booths where people were selling trinkets.

And as I walked along and looked at those little booths, I found a girl there, 15, 16. I don't know, a very young girl. And she had a Bible study workbook.

And she was perusing that while she was waiting for customers to come. She was tugging. She was thinking upon God, occupying her attention, occupying her thoughts with God.

What a wonderful thing. But we're spoiled. We have the finest of the wheat.

We have the best of preaching here in this place. You are privileged to have the best of preaching. But I'm wondering during the week, what goes on in your hearts and your heads? Are you tugging? Are you thinking upon God? Israel was not.

Israel was spoiled. Israel had so much blessing. And Israel no longer was mindful of God that formed them.

There's a correction, God said, that we can expect to have in our lives if we stop tugging. Look at verse 20. God said, I will hide my face from them.

And then I will see what their end shall be. They are children in whom is no faith. God said in Jeremiah, the 18th chapter to his people, Israel, I will show them my back and not my face in the day of their calamity.

God says, you choose not to tug. You choose not to think on Me. There's a penalty for this.

I love you too much to let you get away with this because you need Me. And you've forgotten how desperately you need Me. You see, my friends, our faith is about a relationship with the Creator God.

It's not merely about a belief in our heart. It is certainly not about a creed. It is certainly not about ritual.

It is about a personal, vital, living relationship day by day with our Creator God and our Savior. A loving, vital, bonding relationship. A walk together, if you will.

And he said, you've become unmindful. You don't think of me anymore. You don't value that relationship.

And I'll have to turn my back upon you. I won't walk with you. I'll walk from you.

You won't see my face. You'll see my back. That is the most desperate condition a child of God can ever be in.

In Hosea, the thirteenth chapter, he said, according to their pasture, so were they filled. They were filled and their heart was exalted and therefore, they have forgotten Me. How many times and how many ways through the Old Testament, God describes what happened to His people who just didn't think upon God day by day.

He said, O Israel, in Hosea 13, O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is your help. Why have you done this to yourself? Why have you chosen to be unmindful? Why have you chosen not to think upon Me? My dear friends, I have to believe the longer I live life and know my dreadful condition. That self-centeredness is mankind's greatest enemy.

All of our thoughts about ourselves and so little thoughts about our God. Self-centered thoughts begin the day we are born. We start crying for sustenance.

We cry because our need is great and we think of our needs. And we never grow out of thinking of ourselves and how we can supply what we want for ourselves. There is only one cure for that, that I know of.

It's tugging. It's thinking upon God. It's centering our thoughts where they belong.

Upon the one to whom we owe everything or the one to whom all of our being must be directed. If we are to have any kind of life worth living, when we think upon God, we live our lives in awe of God. Are you battling with lust? Are you battling with greed? Are you battling with anger? Are you battling with idolatry? There is a solution for it.

It's tugging. It's thinking upon God. It's changing our thoughts from the unacceptable that we dwell upon to the God that we must dwell upon.

And in the process of that, we learn that our life is not about us. It's about our God. The more we tug, the more we think upon God, the more we set our affection on things above.

And not on things on the earth, Colossians 3. Tugging is the cure for what ails us spiritually. I don't know what ails you spiritually this morning. I don't know what your besetting sins may be.

It's not my business to know. But I do know this, that if we will set our affection upon the God to whom we owe everything, if our thoughts will be centered upon Him, if we will cease to be unmindful of Him and become mindful of Him, and how much we owe Him, it will renew us. It will revive us.

It will redirect us. It will set our feet on a right path. Because He will be before our face at the end of the path.

He says, Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee. I will set you free, He said, and you will glorify Me. Call upon Me.

Tug. Think upon Me. And I'll set you free.

I'll set you free of those bondages, those addictions, those derelictions of life, that you as a believer find yourself ensnared in. Think upon Me. Be renewed with Me.

I close with Psalm 63. If you would turn and see what God has to say. Here is the prayer.

Here is the prayer for us to pray today. Before we leave this place. In our hearts.

Here is our prayer. The prayer for people who have, because of the intrusions of daily living, ceased to tug, to think upon God. Here is the prayer.

O God, Thou art my God. Early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee.

My flesh longeth for Thee. In a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see Thy power and Thy glory as I've seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee.

Thus will I bless Thee while I live. I will lift up my hands in Thy name. O my soul, be satisfied as with marrow and fatness in my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips when I remember Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night watches.

Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after Thee. Thy right hand upholdeth me.

What was the psalmist saying in verse 8 when he said, My soul follows hard after Thee? He said, God, I am tugging upon You. My soul is thinking upon You. My soul is depending on You.

And I find that Your right hand holds me up. What satisfaction! What fulfillment! What completeness of life! Is there something missing in your life as a believer? Perhaps God is missing and it never dawned on you that I go through hours and hours and hours of a day and don't really think upon God. He is not in my thoughts.

I may go through a week from Sunday to Sunday and He is hardly in my thoughts. No wonder I live in a dry and thirsty land. No wonder my problems are so great.

All I can see is my problems. I never see God. I never think upon God.

All I can think of is my health. All I can think of is my empty purse. All I can think of is the horrible thoughts that come into my mind that are so wicked.

You know what we ought to do, folks? You know, we meet each other. We pass each other. We say, how are you doing today? Oh, I'm doing great, brother.

I'm doing great. It might be a good greeting for us as believers as we see each other around the community or in and out of church. Have you tugged today? How are you tugging today? How are you feeling today? How's it going today? How are you tugging today? You know, just that little reminder could bring some of us back to the reality that my success in life depends, as a believer, upon being mindful of God every day of my life and every waking moment of my life, of the utter dependency I have upon Him.

How are you tugging today? Well, you say, I'm doing well. Well, it's the Lord's Day. Our thoughts are punning.

But what about tomorrow when the thoughts of daily living crowd Him out? God says I have a bone to pick with My people. I have a judgment, a chastisement that I must bring to them because they have forgotten Me in all of their fatness, in having so much, in everything going so right. They just don't think upon Me.

May it never be said of us. May we never have to face the loving, chastening hand of God to bring us back to thinking upon God. May we abide there.

May we live our life there and know all the blessings that come as a result. Shall we pray? Our Father, we're no different than Israel. Those people who were unmindful of You, having had so many blessings from You, were people just like us.

And their sins are so often the sins that we find ourselves in. And we need Your help. We live in a busy world of stress, confusion, distraction.

Lord, there's so much going on around us and in us. And we become so neglectful of You. Forgive us, Lord, for that.

We need Your pardon. We humbly ask for it. We freely confess our wrong.

Let us not hide behind superficialities and glib prayers and careless words of piety, which we don't mean. Lord, let us walk under the shelter of Your wings, at Your side, in Your presence. Let us live that we might be glad that our lives might continue to be the recipients of Your blessing, how we need Your blessing, Lord.

And so we pray Your help and Your forgiveness and Your restoration. In Jesus' name, amen. And everybody's safe.

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