



## **“DON’T FORGET GOD”**

**Kevin Presley**

Today, I want to talk about one the most common downfalls of humanity. It is a pattern that is repeated many times over. When God delivered the Hebrews out of the land of Egypt, He had a big concern over their future. He knew how easy it was for man to be faithful and true when he feel like he needs God, but He also knew how easy it was for mankind to forget about Him when hard times went away. In Deuteronomy 6, we find a stark and sobering warning from Moses to the people.

**Deuteronomy 6:4-12 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”**

It is a pattern that is still being repeated today. I want to talk to you about the danger of forgetting God. The history of the ancient Israelites is almost a broken record. For a while they would be faithful and then they would drift away. It was easy for them to serve God when He delivered them from their enemies or when they accepted the fact that trouble or danger was on the doorstep, but as soon as God

won their battles and gave them plenty to eat, it wasn't long before they forgot about Him and their pleas for His help and salvation. They soon forgot about their broken promises to Him.

God knew that would be the case. In fact, every good leader God put over His people knew that would be the case. Moses and Joshua both warned God's people not to forget the Lord in their times of victory and prosperity. Our text for today was Moses' very firm warning to the people. They were to remind themselves of His law, write His law everywhere they went, that they might be conscious of God's presence, care and provision, as well as their obligation to Him. Moses knew and God knew that they would easily turn aside, forgetting about their relationship with and their commitment to the Lord. Consequently, throughout their history, their lives were marked by fickleness and compromise. You know, men are really no different today. We tend to turn to God in times of need, then forget all about Him in times of plenty. But every man should remember God—whether in the valley of tragedy or on the mountain of triumph. In fact, this is one of the most elementary teachings of the Bible.

**Ecclesiastes 12:1 “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;”**

Whether a man lives his life in success, prosperity and ease, or in the pit of poverty, failure and trial, we're all ultimately headed for the grave where we must meet God face to face. What a terrible tragedy if we've lived out our lives without remembering our Creator!

Forgetting God is more common than we might care to admit. It is a sin that wears several disguises. Pride, for example, is really the absence of God in our hearts. It is really one of the most common and root sins of mankind. When a man is puffed up with pride and arrogance, it's an indication that he has rooted God out of his heart. He has forgotten there is One far greater than himself. Careless and sinful living is the sin of forgetting God's promise of coming judgment. Listen to Solomon:

**Ecclesiastes 11:9 “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”**

So, we forget God when we forget that our deeds are going to be examined and answered for one day. We also forget God when we worry.

**Philippians 4:6, “Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”**

We only worry when we forget that God is Sovereign. He is in control and His promises are faithful and sure.

Then you have those who are selfish. Selfish people are guilty of forgetting God's love for others. Jesus said in **Matthew 25** that many people are going to be turned away at the judgment because they didn't care about and meet the needs of *the least of these*. He said when we fail to care about the hungry, the sick, the prisoner and the poor we have failed to love and care for Jesus Himself.

So, forgetting God is a subtle sin. It's easy to be deceived about, and it's an easy sin to commit because there are a lot of things that easily lead us to do so. Let's consider some of the reasons that men forget God.

## I. Why do we forget God?

Many willfully forget about God because of their guilt. Their guilty conscience drives them to try to work God out of their consciousness. They don't want to think about God's will and the fact of the coming judgment. Rather, they want to live as they want—to experience the pleasure of the flesh and the pleasures of this life. They silence the guilt of their conscience by forgetting about the Lord.

**John 3:20 “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.”**

One of the first products of the sin of Adam was a sense of guilt and shame. He became aware of his guilt in the losing of his innocence. He didn't want to face God in his guilt and the Bible says he and Eve went and tried to hide themselves. Men are no different today. When the sting of their conscience would urge them to repent, many choose to ignore and silence their conscience by shunning the Bible and the church and all of the other influences in their life that would otherwise make them feel guilty about their sin.

In **Romans 1**, Paul tells us that this was the case with the ancient world. They had moved away from God, shutting Him out of their hearts, lives, and consciences.

**Romans 1:18 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”**

That phrase *who hold the truth in unrighteousness* doesn't mean that they found the truth and held onto it; rather that they *suppressed the truth*. They didn't want the truth, so they tried to remove it from their minds and their consciousness. That's what a guilty conscience will oftentimes do. It leads men to willfully forget God.

Sometimes, we forget God because of plain old worldliness. The glitter and glamour of this world is a powerful thing and a lot of us have a difficult time looking beyond it.

**I John 2:15 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**

The world is a big distraction and Satan knows that, so he dangles the charms of earth before our eyes hoping we'll eventually forget all about our souls. Many of us do. Worldliness is consuming many in the church today. It is one of the single greatest enemies of the church, particularly in America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is robbing churches of their dedication, their zeal and their consecration to the Lord. Even the church's influence and salvation is being robbed many times by worldliness. Satan knows that and revels in the fact!

I suppose that prosperity has been one of the greatest causes, though, for men forgetting God. It has always been that way. The prophecy of Amos was issued to God's people during what we would call an 'economic boom.' The people were rich and fat and were occupied with worldly gain and pleasure.

**Amos 6:1-4 “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines:**

**be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;”**

Change a few of the surroundings and cultural references and you would have a snapshot of the modern church in America, I’m afraid. For too long, we’ve been rich with gold and drunk with pleasure and God has become a God of convenience and nothing more than a relic that we pay lip-service to from time to time. Take away people’s riches and possessions and suddenly they begin wondering where God went. They often start looking for Him in those times of turmoil and desperation!

You know, the gospel never has fared very well in rich and contended lands. Eighty years ago, church buildings were full and people cared about spiritual things because there was something going on called the “Great Depression.” However, we recovered from that. If you trace the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, little by little we have become one of the richest nations on earth and as a result, religion has become an insignificant part of many of our lives. Despite the economic setbacks that we’ve faced in our nation over the last several years, we are still a very rich, prosperous and secure nation. That causes men to forget God.

In 2002, it was my privilege to travel to the Philippines for about 3 weeks and preach along with another brother throughout the island of Luzon. The Philippines is an impoverished, third-world country. The poorest of Americans look very rich to some in that far-away place. It was a tremendous thing that frankly, I didn’t have much experience with over here in the United States: seeing people make tremendous effort to gather to hear preaching from the Bible. People would walk for miles and go to a great deal of trouble to come hear us preach. They didn’t have comfortable, air-conditioned church buildings with padded pews to sit on. They met in open-air arbors in the tropical heat. They didn’t sit and keep an eye on their watches either. They came to hear the preaching of God’s word and they were hungry to get it. Many of them don’t make in a year what many Americans make in a week. They realize a need for God. Nations that prosper quickly become a much more difficult mission field. I want to ask you today and I hope you’ll seriously think about it...are you forgetting God and leaving Him out of your life? Before you say no, I want you to stop and think about some of the ways we forget the Lord.

## **II. How do we forget God?**

First, we forget God when we fail to thank Him for His blessings. There is not a person listening to this sermon today that is not the beneficiary of untold blessings from God. If you were to accept the challenge of the old song “Count your many blessings and name them one by one,” you couldn’t do it! You may not have a lot of money compared to other people. Everything in your life may not be like you planned it or hoped it would be, but sit down and start listing the blessings of your life and you’ll be amazed at what an undertaking that is. Every bite of food we eat, the shelter over our heads, the clothes on our backs are just a few of the multiplied blessings of God, especially in this land of abundance and plenty. But how many times do people take their food and gobble it down without even bowing their heads in a brief moment of gratitude to the God who provided it?

One of the first things that happened to the Gentile world of old that led them into a state of total godlessness and degeneracy, according to Paul, was that they were not thankful for God’s blessings.

**Romans 1:21** “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

It’s a terrible sin in the sight of God and an indication that we have forgotten Him and think we can get by without Him. If you have a place to live, you need to thank God for that. If you have any measure of health and well-being, you need to thank God for that. If you have clothes to put on and a car to drive, you need to thank God for that. If we’re mindful of God’s goodness, there is truly an inexhaustible list of blessings for which we can thank Him every day. Here is the result: when we’re thankful, we remember our dependence on Him and we walk more humbly before Him, which is what many of us desperately need to do today.

Secondly, we forget the Lord when we make our plans without respect to Him.

**James 4:13-15** “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

You see, our lives and our futures depend on the will of God. When we so presumptuously boast that we’re going to do this and that, we’re leaving a vital factor in the equation out and that is the will of God. He holds our very life and breath in His hands. He has our days and our years very carefully numbered. We don’t know what the morrow will hold. We don’t know if there will even be a tomorrow for you or me, but that we’ll face God and answer for the lives we’ve lived here upon the earth. Many people have forgotten about that; they’re not conscious of that. They make their plans from one day to the next, never consulting God’s book of directions for their lives. They never think about how God views their choices or behaviors. They forget God, forging ahead, making plans for their lives without remembering Him.

We also forget God when we forget about His word. That is to say, when we make decisions in our lives without consulting His will. That’s really the idea behind fearing the Lord and keeping His commandments as Solomon told the young man to do in **Ecclesiastes 12:1**. When I fear God, I take into account first and foremost how God feels about what I do in view of the fact that I must answer to Him one day in judgment. We all make critical decisions in life every day, many of them much more important than we give them credit for. Often, we make those decisions based on what’s popular or what other people are going to think or say about them or what we feel like doing. But we are forgetting God when we don’t first—not down the list, but first consult the roadmap of life: God’s holy word.

**Matthew 6:33** “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Let me mention this, too: We forget the Lord when we forget about the vows and the promises we made to Him. How many people start making promises to God in the hour of crises that go unkept when the good times return? Have you ever begged God to help you get better in a time of sickness? Or maybe in desperation, you prayed at the bedside of a sick or dying loved one that if God would come through for you that you would change your life? Maybe you’d start attending the services of the church or start reading your Bible? Start serving the Lord, obey the gospel or stop doing something sinful? Did

you forget about all of those promises when you or your loved one got better? Friend, God takes the vows that we make seriously.

**Matthew 5:33-37** “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

The idea of swearing by something as a way of guaranteeing you'll do something is forbidden here by Jesus. For example, you'll hear people swear to something on the basis of God hearing them and perhaps striking them dead if they're lying or if they fail to do what they say they will do. Jesus forbids that as a practice because He expects us to always do what we say and to keep our word—not only to other people but to Him as well. If you make a promise to God, you'd better be prepared to keep it. There are several things that are essentially vows made to the Lord and they are vows that the Lord expects us to keep. When we obey Him in baptism, we are committing our lives unto Him. Maybe I'm speaking to someone today who has forgotten the Lord. You need to remember Him. *Beware, lest thou forget the Lord.*

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