

AUGUST 21, 1988

ADVICE FOR A GOOD LIFE

Would it surprise you if I said that most of us are as successful as we really want to be? It is generally thought that everyone wants to be more successful or prosperous than they are; however, it is my contention that most of us know how to be better than we are, we know how to be better stewards of what God has given us, and know better ways of dealing with people than we use. If we really wanted to do better, to be more successful, to be richer, or whatever; then we know how to do it and could work more diligently at it than we choose to do. And many times, we do choose how good a life we will have. Even if you did not know how to do certain things to be more prosperous or successful, there are many books, courses, and seminars that are around to learn better ways. Again we make a choice in the matter and, in effect, we become as successful as we really want to be.

The best general advice ever given for living a happy and successful life was given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. But how many people really go the second mile, or pray for those that spitefully use them, or turn the other cheek, or seek the Kingdom of God as their first priority? It is a matter of choice when we are given good advice as to whether we will follow it.

After leading the nation of Israel in the wilderness for forty years, Moses once again brought them up to the border of the Promised Land. At this time, all of the adults that had witnessed God's miracles in the early days of the exodus from Egypt had died except for Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. It was time to go in and possess the land that God had promised them when He called their ancestor Abraham. Moses was very old at this point, 120 years, and he set about to give the people of this nation advice for a good life and in doing so he

recalled the law and commandments that God had given to this nation. This charge to the nation is recorded in Deuteronomy. In chapter 5 the Ten Commandments are repeated and in chapter 6 they are told why and how to implement these commandments.

Some samples of the wisdom shared with this people: Moses first told them that the commandments were given to them so that they could do them. Just think about that for awhile. We would really be deprived if we did not have law and rules of conduct. We do not need to re-learn what works and what doesn't work in life. In carrying out the commandments they would learn respect and reverence for God and, because the laws and commandment work for good, want to do these commandments. The resultant benefit would be long life and prosperity. Not only were the people to walk in God's way but they were to also teach the principles to their children and do so at every opportunity so that the knowledge and fear of God was interwoven in the fabric of life. For example, in verse 7 we see, "and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."

DEUTERONOMY 6:10-15 A lot of people think that grace is just a New Testament concept. Here we see grace in action. These people are going to go in and take up operation of cities that are already built, live in houses that are already built, harvest crops that are already planted and drink water from wells that were already dug. All this was just given to them and the concern that was there is that they would take it all for granted and not appreciate that God had provided all this for them using the heathen people to do the work. An even greater

concern was there in that the people might think that somehow they had done all of that themselves. A still great danger was that they might even try to give credit to the heathen gods of the the people of Canaan.

If you think about it, this is not too dissimilar to our situation in the United States. We have a fine network of roads and a transportation system, a mail system, utilities, businesses, all of which we take for granted. We really don't have an appreciation of all the hard work and effort that others invested in developing the things that we enjoy. We are not nearly thankful enough to God for His grace in allowing us to be born in this land of privilege. Many people somehow think that they "deserve" all of this, and more, and fail to realize that God has blessed the Christian nations of this world and that His grace goes beyond salvation of the soul in the "great by and by". The nations of the world that are the most prosperous have, in general, a Christian heritage. I would even go so far as to say a non-Catholic Christian heritage.

Obedience to God's commandments brings a prosperity to life and that very blessing of prosperity can be the very thing that would tend to cause us to drift away from God if we are not careful. There is great danger in drifting away from God and forgetting that He is our Source of strength and blessing. This danger lies in the fact that no matter how good we have it now, that one day, difficulty will come and we will look for help beyond ourselves. If we are not close to God then we may turn to other sources. Many people read their horoscope for advice, some go to fortune tellers, others try such things as transcendental meditation and others turn to yoga. This is "going after other gods" of which the nation of Israel was warned NOT to do. We open up ourselves to demonic oppression by dabbling in such things and every Christian should know better than to do such things.

DEUTERONOMY 6:16-19 The

word translated "tempt" implies to put to the test. The message was clear, they were not to test God in the way that they did when they ran out of water in the wilderness. There they kept asking, "Is the Lord with us or not?" They accused God of bring them out there to let them die of thirst. There is a legitimate way of proving the Lord and that is what is suggested in the next verse. Diligently keep his commandments and do what is good in the sight of God and see what results--now that is a test that God welcomes. God will bless in a special way when we are obedient to Him.

One of the special ways that Israel was going to be blessed was that God would go before them defeating their enemies before they arrived on the scene. The battle would be won even before they started to fight. We can depend on God to supply grace to us just because He loves us and beyond that to give more blessings as we follow His commandments and instruction.