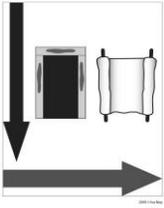


Week Twelve: Blessings and Cursings - Deuteronomy 28



Overview

The Book of Deuteronomy contains Moses' final address to the children of Israel before they cross over into Canaan. The name Deuteronomy means "second law" because Moses repeats so much of the law from the other books of the Pentateuch (5 books of Moses). Deuteronomy recounts the journeys of the children of Israel and

repeats the Ten

Commandments, the regulations concerning food, concerning bondslaves, and numerous moral, ceremonial, and civil laws.

New Testament writers quote Deuteronomy nearly as often as they quote from the Psalms and Isaiah. Jesus relays the importance of Deuteronomy when He resists the devil by quoting from this book. Bruce Waltke calls this book "one of the great documents of the Bible, or of any time."¹

Deuteronomy begins with a "recollection of the past salvation history and reflections on its future."² Moses "recites their history with the purpose of encouraging them to keep covenant, and he argues that there is no god like I AM and no divine election like that of

Israel" (Deut. 4:1-40).³ Moses reminds Israel of the Ten Commandments and then "reflects upon Israel's future according to whether they obey or disobey his command" (Deut. 6:1-26:19).⁴ Moses then motivates Israel to obey the Lord in the following areas:

1. Teach following generations God's Story (Deut. 6)
2. Remember that the primary command is to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5)
3. Remove evil influences (Deut. 7 - intermarriage, anti-social behavior, idolatry)
4. Understand their identity as people of Yahweh (Deut. 7:7ff)
5. Do not forget God when they come into the land and prosper (Deut. 8)
6. Develop a "big" view of God (Deut. 9:1-5; 10:12-17)
7. Worship rightly (Deut. 12:4)
8. Practice good hygiene (Deut. 14)

¹ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 479.

² *Ibid.*, 481.

³ *Ibid.*, 482.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 483.

9. Show compassion to poor people (Deut. 15)
10. Remember and celebrate the past (Deut. 16)
11. Commit to godly leadership (Deut. 17:14-20)
12. Honor one another and avoid being defiled (Deut. 21:1-26:19)
13. Respond obediently to God (Deut. 28)
14. Choose Life (Deut. 29:1-30:20)
15. Commit to personal and communal Bible literacy (Deut. 6:7-8,20-25; 11:18-21; 31:1-32:52)

Moses ends his forty years of leadership with a song and a blessing. Both reveal the uniqueness of God, the uniqueness of His relationship with Israel, and the uniqueness of the covenant He makes with His people.

Today's lesson focuses on Deuteronomy 28 and Moses' admonition to Israel that they obey the Lord. He lists the consequences of both obedience and disobedience.

Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to draw parallels between God's heart to bless Israel, and their freedom to choose obedience and blessing, or disobedience and cursing. God desires to bless His people; that blessings is based on man's freedom to choose between obedience or disobedience.

Key Truths

God desires to bless His people. The problem, then, is not that God is unwilling to bless His people, but that His people have a disposition toward sin and rebellion.

In spite of the clearly laid out consequences accompanying disobedience, man continues to go his own way.

Lesson Outline

1. The Blessings of Obedience

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth” (Deut. 28:1).

- Obedience to God exalts the people of God so that other peoples and nations exalt the God of Israel (28:1)

God promised Abraham that, because of His blessing upon him, he would be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). The blessing of God upon His people draws the envy of other nations, and is, therefore, one of the greatest evangelistic tools God’s people possess.

- Obedience to God restores the reproductive ability of both the land and the wombs of Israel (28:2-6). God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, which was filled with plant life that had been created by God to reproduce. Sin introduced thorns and thistles and made reproduction and cultivation difficult. The blessing of God upon His people restores the reproductive process in all manner of life.
- Protects God’s people from the hand of their enemies and creates fear in the hearts of their enemies (28:7-10).
- Obedience to God opens the storehouses of heaven to provide for His people and, through them, care for the needs of surrounding nations (28:11-12).
- Obedience to God exalts the people of God above the nations around them (28:13-14).

God delights to show His greatness to the nations by blessing His obedient people.

2. The Cursings of Disobedience

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you will serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you” (28:47-48).

- Disobedience to God prevents successful reproduction of both land and womb (28:15-20,38-40).
- Disobedience to God plagues mind, body, and land with disease (28:21-23,26-29,34-35,42)
- Disobedience to God causes disruptions in weather patterns and famine (28:24)
- Disobedience to God brings defeat before enemies (28:25)

- Disobedience to God causes loss of property and family, and oppression (28:30-33,41)
- Disobedience to God leads to captivity by enemy nations (28:36-37,49-52)
- Disobedience to God demotes God's people to servants and debtors to other nations (28:43-44)

As if those are not enough consequences of disobedience, He adds even more curses on those who do not obey His voice of the Lord and keep His commandments--to those who find no joy in their relationship and service to the Living God. Israel will experience such trials that they will even eat the flesh of their children (28:53-57). He continues by describing the consequences of their refusal to turn back to God by increasing the severity of their suffering through extraordinary disease, captivity, and scattering throughout the earth.

From Creation, God reveals Himself as good, gracious, and redemptive; yet He moves against those who continually harden their hearts, rebel, and resist His gracious overtures. Since the Fall, man either walks with God by faith in His promises of redemption or rebels against God by living by sight, fleshly appetites, and outright rebellion. Instead of acting according to God's instructions, Adam and Eve choose to live according to the lust of the flesh. Abel believes God while Cain resists God's overture, rebels, and is cursed by God. The entire world, drowning in sin, goes to a watery grave--save Noah and his immediate family. Forty years in the wilderness has proved to Israel time and again that the cost of losing God's blessing is far too dear.

That God desires to bless His people is clear throughout Scripture. The problem, then, lies within the human heart. Deuteronomy records both God's goodness to His people and His response to continued rebellion from His people.

Jeremiah 7:23 captures God's heart to bless His people and man's heart to rebel, "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward."

Application - What does this lesson teach us about God? Man? Sin? Redemption?

- God's primary command for His people is to love Him; this word is used in Deuteronomy more than any other one command.
- God instructs His people to walk in His ways; His ways lead to life and blessing. While obedience does not save, true faith leads believers to walk "in step" with God.
- Walking in God's ways puts His followers in the paths of His blessing; walking contrary to God's ways brings ever more serious consequences.
- God's law to Israel contained moral statutes, ceremonial provisions, and civil codes. Christ fulfilled all three of these sections of the Law perfectly, so that believers are saved by His obedience (Romans 5:19). Christ abolished our need to fulfill the ceremonial law of the sacrifices; He fulfilled the civil law (regulations

pertaining to the nation of Israel at a certain time and place), and He fulfilled the moral law. The moral law is still binding, but the other two facets of the Law no longer apply to Christians.

Summary

God speaks through His Word to give clear instruction for living that will bring blessing and to give clear warning for those who forsake His ways.

God acts later in Israel's history when He responds to their continual rebellion by raising up the Assyrians and the Babylonians to take them into captivity.

God reveals His desire to bless His people as He describes what He will do for those who obey Him.

Discussion Questions

If Christ has fulfilled the Law, why do believers still look to the Law? What is the place of the Law for contemporary Christians?

If blessings from God all come by grace through faith, what is the place of obedience related to blessings?

What does it mean to "love God" with all your heart, soul, and strength?