

Sunday School Lesson for November 16, 2025
Deuteronomy 28:1-6 and 15-19

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this third Sunday of November, we're tracing the steps of the children of Israel as they make their way to the Promised Land after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. Over the last several weeks, we've been reviewing snippets from Moses' last three messages to the children of Israel as he prepares them for the final stage of the fulfillment of God's plan for them, revealed to their father, Abraham, nearly seven hundred years before. As we come today to chapter 28, verses one through six and fifteen through nineteen, we'll consider just a small portion of the blessings and curses the Israelites would experience, depending on whether or not they obeyed the Lord's instructions regarding the idol worship practiced by the people who currently lived in the land.

Following chapter six and our study last week, Moses encouraged the people to continue to heed and carry out the instructions the Lord had given them, reminding them, for example in chapter twelve, verse 28: "Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God." He reminded them of their history, from the time of their bondage in Egypt to the present moment as they wait to behold God's promise to Abraham fulfilled. He restates many of the terms of the covenant--both societal laws and laws for purification.

We find Messianic prophecy as well in chapter eighteen, verse eighteen, where Moses repeats the Word of the Lord when He said, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" --the passage Peter quoted in Acts, chapter three, verse 22, when he spoke to the crowds who were amazed at the healing of the man who had been lame since

birth. And there's so much more in this second of Moses' messages in chapters five through 26, concluding with these words beginning in verse sixteen of chapter 26: "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice. And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor / high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised."

Moses' third message begins in chapter 27 with some instructions about what they were to do when they finally crossed over the Jordan River. First, they were to set up a stone memorial with the words of the Law inscribed upon it, and they would erect an altar to the Lord and offer burnt offerings upon it. Then, the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin would assemble on Mount Gerizim and the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali would gather on Mount Ebal. As the Levites call out each of twelve curses for failing to fulfill the covenant obligations of the children of Israel, the people would agree to and affirm those curses by saying, "Amen." The last of these curses served as a summary to them all: "'Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen,'" meaning, "may it be so, even as you have said."

Chapter 28 continues this affirmation as the Levites call out six blessings pronounced upon the people in the first six verses followed by six declarations of what the Lord will do in response to their obedience in verses seven through fourteen. Beginning in verse fifteen and continuing through the end of a rather long chapter--68 verses in all--, Moses returns to naming the curses that will come upon them and pointing out examples of the ways the Lord Himself will punish them for failing to follow the statutes and commandments of the Lord /

and some of the consequences of their failure to obey the Law of the Lord. It's quite an extensive and even horrifying list, ending in verse 68 with the threat that the Lord will cause them to return to their former bondage in Egypt. Certainly a passionate warning of the consequences of neglecting this great gift of God's Law that had been given to them from the Lord Himself so that they might live life as God designed and desired them to live.

Our first focal text covers the six blessings found in the first six verses of chapter 28: "And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out."

The blessings that we find enumerated in these verses are an amplification of those that we found previously in Exodus, chapter 23; Leviticus, chapter 26; and Deuteronomy, chapters eleven and 27. Here in chapter 28, the blessings are spelled out in more detail, beginning with the general pronouncement that, if they would faithfully obey the Lord, carefully carrying out everything He had laid out in His laws for life, Moses says that "the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth." This promise may seem strange in light of the greatest commandment that we studied two weeks ago to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. Are the real blessings of loving God to be found in material blessings like being set above the nations of the earth? Yet that's what we find here in that, if the people of Israel are faithful, they will enjoy prosperity, productivity, riches, and victory in battle. Even when we read that Israel is to be established as a people holy unto the Lord, the result of that is seen in that the people are separated from

the rest of the nations of the world in terms of material blessings instead of the moral and spiritual characteristics that you might expect from a people recognized for their holiness.

But the material blessings--or curses--would be the evidence that the world would recognize to be the result of Israel's faithfulness or faithlessness. If the people are faithful to the Lord, the material blessings that come as a result of their obedience and God's favor will be the confirming testimony that they are a people holy unto the Lord. On the other hand, if the people become unfaithful, the curses that fall upon them will be a confirming witness that they have lost God's favor because they have rejected Him.

It's important to note that this is not an early form of the prosperity gospel, a simple process of living a good life and reaping the rewards. We need to take into consideration the historical context, the role of the covenant, and the unique relationship between God and His chosen people.

First, the historical context. At this point in salvation history, material blessings were considered to be evidences of divine favor while unfavorable experiences were believed to be the result of God's displeasure. Job's friends and even the disciples who asked whose fault it was that the man of John, chapter nine was born blind are perfect examples of this. One writer explains it like this: "The absence of moral and spiritual faithfulness does affect even the fruitfulness of the soil, the [fertility] of animals, the prevalence of disease, the stability of ordered life, and success in war. This was visible to the ancient world generally in a dim way; but by the inspired men of the Old Covenant it was clearly seen, for they were enlightened for the very purpose of seeing the hand of God where others saw it not. But they never thought of tracing out the chain of intermediate causes by which such results were connected with men's spiritual state. They saw the facts, they recognized the truth, and they threw themselves back at once upon the will of God as the sufficient explanation."

In addition to the historical context is the role the covenant played in these blessings and curses. Israel had been called by God to live according to a holy lifestyle. In Leviticus, chapter eleven, verse 45, the Lord said, “For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” They were to reflect the character of God by living according to His law, a law that reflects His character of holiness. In this sense, obedience is the only appropriate response to God’s grace, while the blessings are the natural benefits of living in accordance with His covenant instructions.

One of the writers for our lesson notes that “In the ancient Near East, covenants or treaties were typical in religious life. In ancient religions, covenants were brought before the deities, confirmed by oath in the name of those deities, and believed to be enforced by those deities. What is outlined in Deuteronomy between the God of Israel and the Israelites would have been familiar to ancient readers. However, unlike other religions, Israel’s God was a party to the covenant and not just an enforcer of the covenant. This difference speaks to the relational nature of God’s covenant with Israel. As we know, the God of the Bible is not a distant deity. God is sovereign over all things, a transcendent God. But He is also immanent and relational. That is, He is “our” God. Israel’s God sustained His people with His presence and [His] promises. He was with them. In many ways, God’s care for Israel prefigures Christ’s care for Christians.”

In this introduction to the blessings the people would enjoy and the curses they would suffer, it’s important to remember, third, the relationship between the people of Israel and God. At this point in their history, they’ve already been declared the people of God. This happened at Mount Sinai as we read in Exodus, chapter nineteen, verses three through six where the Lord said, “You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, ... and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The call to obey the commandments that Moses has been passing on to them flowed out of their identity as the

people of God. So the blessings they would enjoy weren't rewards that they earned if they obeyed, but a reality that they would enjoy as the people of God who lived according to the plan of the One Who had called them to be a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

Deuteronomy, chapter 26, verses eighteen and nineteen are key here. In these two verses, we read, "And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised."

God says, "You are" and "you will be" as He establishes their identity and announces the blessings of their covenant relationship with Him. In other words, God is calling them to live according to all that He has declared them to be. If they lived as God's treasured possession--meaning that if they were to live as they were designed and as God intended them to live--in obedience to His owner's manual--so to speak--that God had written for them in His Law, the natural outcome of that lifestyle and impact on the world would be such that they would enjoy fame and honor / high above all the other nations.

One of the writers for our lesson adds this: "In living according to God's law and proclaiming God's glory, Israel was to be a light unto the nations. In this sense, Israel's mission was tied to their identity. The same is true for Christians today. What God has declared of you in your salvation is not something you grow into through sanctification but part of your mission in evangelization. Just as a parent reminds his teenager before the child leaves the house, "Remember, you represent this family," so too does God call us to live according to **His** family's values. We cannot separate who we are from how we live. In fact, how we live tells others who we are. This is why obedience was so important for Israel's life, not only for them but also for the watching world around them."

There's also the aspect that Moses has already told us about in chapter four about how the other nations of the world would regard the people of Israel as they followed the Lord. Beginning in verse five, Moses said, "See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?"

As they obeyed the Lord, the rest of the world would marvel at how effective God's Law was in maintaining a stable and just society as the people held fast and clung to the Lord--as we know from the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon's court--First Kings, chapter ten, verse six--where she said, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard." As the people faithfully obeyed the voice of the Lord, living out who they were by being careful to do all that Moses had commanded that day, the Lord would set them high above all the nations of the earth.

So, how would those blessings be seen and experienced in the daily lives of those who did what the Lord told them to do? They would, first, be blessed in the city. Having trudged through the wilderness of the Negev for the last forty years, they could only dream of city life--opening a real door instead of tent flap to come into your house, furnished with all the comforts of home, never having to pack a suitcase again. There would be defensive walls around the city so they could sleep peacefully at night. This security is echoed in verse seven: "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be

defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.” In addition to the protection they would enjoy, there would be shops and markets where tradesmen from all over the world would come and sell their treasures. Those who chose to live in the city would enjoy the blessings of life in the city.

They would be blessed in the field. The little country villages would be places of warmth and serenity. Their fields and vineyards and sheep and cattle would be wondrously productive. The land would bring forth fruit abundantly, and those who chose to live there would find joy and rest. And, once again, this blessing is reinforced in verse eight: “The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you,” and, in the first part of verse twelve as well: “The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands.”

Third--verse four: “Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.” The many children born to them would be healthy and strong and well-mannered, and they would marry well and have children of their own who would follow in the ways of the Lord and experience all the blessings that Moses is promising them.

Not only the people, but the farmlands, the orchards, and the fields; the wheat, the barley, the grapes, the figs, pomegranates, olives and dates; the cattle, the herds, and the flocks would also be wonderfully productive, prolific, and fruitful. Poverty would be unheard of because everyone would have more than enough as God’s blessings came upon them as they obeyed the Law of the Lord.

And the abundance of the land would be put to use in the kitchen where--verse five--“Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.” The basket

would be the place where fruit was kept. As it was blessed, it would remain full of the choicest fruits of the land. The kneading bowl was where the daily bread was prepared, and for it to be blessed would mean that there would always be an ample supply of bread and all other foods as well.

Then, in order to round out and summarize these five blessings, a comprehensive, sixth blessing follows in verse six: “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.” It’s the same kind of summary that we find in Psalm 121: “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”

As a result of God’s lavish blessings poured out upon His chosen people for their faithfulness to love Him with all their heart, soul, and strength, Moses tells them in verse nine, “The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.”

Their reputation will be so great that everybody in the world will want to know how and why they are so richly blessed, and they’ll be able to share the good news with them that they love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, and strength, and if they would love the Lord in the same way, they, too, would experience life as God intended for them.

In all of this, it would be a fulfillment of what David spoke of in Psalm 144, beginning in verse twelve: “May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace; may

our granaries be full, providing all kinds of produce; may our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields; may our cattle be heavy with young, suffering no mishap or failure in bearing; may there be no cry of distress in our streets! Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!”

In all their business and activities of life whether public or private, in every visit or journey they should make--leaving or returning--, and in every national endeavor to seize, hold, and purify the land God was giving to them--no aspect of their personal or public lives as individuals or as a nation would remain untouched by the blessings of God--everything they did would be improved, enriched, enhanced, and blessed by God as they faithfully obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, being careful to do all His commandments that Moses was commanding them that day--a perfect formula for success.

These blessings continue beyond our first focal text in verses seven through fourteen, and, even though they're not part of our focal texts for today, we need to hear the rest of what would be their destiny if they obeyed the Word of the Lord: “The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the

tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

How many times did you hear the words, “The Lord will?” Six times, like the six blessings of our first focal text, we find the personal endowment of God’s provision, purity, pride, prosperity, and prominence to these descendants of a single individual who believed God and his faith was counted as righteousness, a nation of people who had just spent four hundred years as slaves to an Egyptian pharaoh and forty years wandering in the desert waiting for an entire generation to die off. Each of these promises was conditional upon the “if” that presented them with the option of obeying or disobeying. Verse one: “if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God;” verse two: “if you obey the voice of the LORD your God;” verse nine: “if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways;” verse thirteen: “if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God;” and verse fourteen: “if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today.” These were amazing promises and possibilities set before them to be received from the hand of the God Who had personally orchestrated their history for His Kingdom purposes. Such were the covenant promises God laid out as they fulfilled their covenant obligations by simply following His instructions for life.

But what if they didn’t do what Moses was commanding them to do that day? What if they thought they knew better than Moses or even God about how to live their lives? What if they got distracted and started asking about, looking into, comparing their own worship of the one, true God with that of the idols of the nations they were driving out of the land, and what if they went so far as to actually start accepting some of those ideas about idol worship and adopting some of the practices of the people they were being used of God to bring judgment upon because of their abominations? Unthinkable, right?

Especially in light of God personally shaping and directing their own history in such a clear and dramatic way.

So, they needed to be warned of the consequences of failing to do the things the Lord had commanded them to do. In this very long chapter of 68 verses, we saw that the first fourteen contained promises of blessing. That means that there are 54 verses left in which Moses lays out some of the consequences of failing to do what God had planned for and commanded them to do. Only the first five verses are included in our second focal text for today, and they are the reverse of those blessings we found in the first six verses.

Beginning in verse fifteen, we read, “But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.”

The list here in verses fifteen through nineteen correspond to what we saw previously in verses three through six except that the cursing of the basket and kneading bowl appear before the cursing of the fruits in verse eighteen, but that ordering doesn’t appear to have any special significance. If the people failed to follow the instructions the Lord was setting forth for them so that they might live life as God intended, the reverse of the blessings to be anticipated for obedience would fall upon them as a result of their disobedience.

In stark contrast to the safety, security, productivity, abundance, and prosperity that would come as a result of their faithful obedience, their unfaithfulness would bring disaster in every aspect of life: plagues and diseases, drought and famine, war, devastation of the land, finally ending with the

resumed captivity of the people is pictured for them as a powerful incentive to faithfulness to the Lord.

For an agrarian-dependent society, one of the greatest crises they could experience would come in the form of verse seventeen: “Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl,” reinforced in verses 23 and 24 with these words, “The heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. The LORD will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed,” and again in verse 38 with “You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off.” Nothing they could do would change the outcome of their refusal to heed the voice of the Lord.

The fruit of their wombs, the fruit of the ground, the increase of their herds, and the young of their flocks would also be cursed. Moses expands on this beginning in verse thirty: “You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall ravish her. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit. Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat any of it. Your donkey shall be seized before your face, but shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, but there shall be no one to help you. Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all day long, but you shall be helpless.”

And finally, in verse nineteen, Moses summarizes the state of the despair they will experience for having disobeyed the Lord: “Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.” Verse 25: “The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a

horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.” Verse 28: “The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind, and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you.”

Three times in four verses here, Moses warns them that there will be no one to help them. Verse 66: “Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were evening!’ and at evening you shall say, ‘If only it were morning!’ because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see.” And there are many more curses that will come upon them that, when you read them, will turn your stomach.

God’s not being vindictive here, because He’s giving them notice of the clear and present dangers that await them on the other side of the Jordan River. They can avoid these curses, they can experience the full blessedness of everything that God has in store for them in the land of promise, and He’s provided everything they need to make this blessedness a reality. Every warning before judgment is an act of mercy from God’s hand. “If you faithfully obey, ...; But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today,” Moses encourages the people, he warns the people, he pleads with them to choose wisely, to choose life.

Although it’s outside our focal texts for today, the last verse of this chapter provides a very pertinent and emphatic, concluding warning to the people if they fail to faithfully obey the Lord--verse 68: “The Lord will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.” As the exodus from Egypt was to a great degree the birth of the nation into a covenant relationship with God, their failure to fulfill their obligations under the covenant would be the death of the

nation. They had crossed the sea from Egypt as the waves parted before them, but they would return, cooped up in slave ships to be sold in the markets. But since they will have become “a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you away”--verse 38, no one will even care to buy them.

A pitiable end, indeed, for those who had been promised blessings in the city, in the fields, in their homes, in their every endeavor, when they come in and when they go out to such an extent that--verse one: “the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.” How would they choose? How did they choose? How do you choose today as the Lord calls you to love Him with all your heart, soul, and strength? “Now these things happened to them as an example,” Paul writes in First Corinthians, chapter ten, verse eleven, “but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”

Thank you for being part of our brief look at the journey the Israelites followed as they made their way to the homeland God promised to them through Abraham. Next week, we turn to verses eleven through twenty of chapter 30 where Moses will make his final appeal to the people as we conclude Moses’ final message to the children of Israel as well as our series of lessons in Deuteronomy before launching into our advent lessons on the last Sunday of this month.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

The resources for this lesson include Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes (1834), text courtesy of [Internet Sacred Texts Archive](#); The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, text courtesy of [BibleSupport.com](#); The Expositor’s Bible, text courtesy of [BibleSupport.com](#); Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, by Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch [1857-78], text

Courtesy of [Internet Sacred Texts Archive](#) Exposition of the Entire Bible by John Gill (1746-63), text courtesy of [Internet Sacred Texts Archive](#); Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical (John Peter Lange) text courtesy of [BibleSupport.com](#); Expositions Of Holy Scripture, Alexander MacLaren, text courtesy of [BibleSupport.com](#); and The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010 by [BibleSoft, inc.](#)