

October 20, 2013
Deuteronomy 27-30
“Principles of Blessings and Curses”
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Moses’ instructional manual for the Israelites includes directions for setting up pillars of stone in the Promised Land. They were to plaster the stones and write on them *“all the words of the Law [which probably means just Deuteronomy, versus the first five books of the Old Testament].* Additionally, they were to divide the 12 Tribes of Israel, into two groups: six tribes on Mt. Ebal, and six tribes on Mt. Gerizim. They were to face each other in the valley in between and, in the valley the priests were to stand with the Ark of the Covenant. The words of the law were to be read in their entirety, followed by those standing on Mt. Gerizim reciting a list of blessings that would come upon the people if they obeyed God’s commands, and those standing on Mt. Ebal reciting a list of curses that would come upon the people if they disobeyed God’s commands.

Like the Israelites, we should also be aware of the fact that good choices produce good results and bad choices produce bad consequences, and as long as we are prepared to live with the consequences, good or bad, we are free to choose. This was Moses’ message to the Israelites: “You have a choice to make concerning whether to obey God not, but beware that bad choices will bring curses, while good choices will bring blessings.”

In this study, we will learn more about obedience being a choice, and how obedience brings God’s blessings, and disobedience brings God’s curses.

Promises Vs. Principles

1. In [Deuteronomy 28](#), there are 14 verses concerning blessings for obedience,¹ and 54 verses that deal with curses for disobedience.²

¹ [Deuteronomy 28:1-8](#)

² [Deuteronomy 28:15-19](#)

2. **Deuteronomy 28:22, 27** are very descriptive of two of the curses for disobedience.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 28:22** - *"The Lord will smite thee with the botch³ of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed."* (KJV)
 - b. **Deuteronomy 28:27** - *"The Lord shall smite thee with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning..."* (KJV)

3. A proper understanding of biblical promises and principles is very important for Christians, because we need to know how to translate and apply the Scriptures to our life.

4. We need recognize that God may not decide to give every Christian these blessings or these curses.
 - a. Some have obeyed God, yet they have not received God's blessing of having children or they've obeyed God, yet their "barns" aren't full.
 - b. Conversely, we see people who don't obey, honor, or love God, yet their business is booming, they live in an expensive home, drive a better car, they don't have cancer, etc.
 - c. We need to know that it's not like God makes the life of every Believer wonderful, and every unbeliever miserable - that will be meted out in eternity.

5. **Matthew 5:45** - *"He [God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

6. In due time, God will judge the living and the dead, and he will balance every scale, right every wrong, and judge every injustice.

7. In the meantime, while we live in a fallen, sinful world, there will be times when good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people.

8. What's the difference between a promise and a principle?
 - a. Principle - If a portion of Scripture is specifically targeting a time, a people, and a place, then for us it's a principle.
 - b. Promise - If a portion of Scripture is universally intended for all time, all people, and all places, then for us it's a promise.

9. How do we recognize and interpret Scripture as being a promise or a principle?
 - a. A text out of context is a pretext (a false appearance), and a text in a context is a proof text.

³ According to Merriam Webster, a botch is "an inflammatory sore." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/botch>

- b. Example – [John 3:16](#)
 - i. Salvation is a universal promise to all who believe.
 - ii. It's a universal truth for all people, in all places, at all times.
 - iii. Jesus was revealed at a certain time, but Paul would write in [2 Timothy 1:9b-10a](#): *“This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus...”*
 - 1. Even the Old Testament saints believed by faith, looking ahead to the Messiah, when they sacrificed animals until Jesus could be sacrificed for our sins once for all.
- c. Example – [Hebrews 13:5b](#)
 - i. God said, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you,”* which is a promise, because it's for all time, in all places, and for all people.
- d. Example – [Psalm 2:8-9](#)
 - i. *“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”*
 - ii. According to [Revelation 19:15](#), these verses are a Messianic promise; not a promise for Believers today, because we just can't go around “claiming” [Psalm 2:8-9](#), because it's not for us.
 - iii. The principle for us is that [Psalm 2:8-9](#) is a reminder that God is in control and Jesus is coming again!
- e. Example – [Jeremiah 29:10-12](#)
 - i. *“This is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.’ ”*
 - ii. These verses deal specifically with the people of Israel, who would spend 70 years in captivity because of their rebellion against God, and God promises to them.
 - 1. I will be gracious to you.
 - 2. I will bring you back to Israel.
 - 3. I have plans for you.
 - 4. I will prosper you and not harm you.
 - 5. I will give you a hope and future.
 - 6. I will listen when you pray to me.
 - iii. These were promises for specific people, in a specific time and place, and it's easy to see why, because we have not spent 70 years in Babylon, etc.

iv. These verses are principles that help us understand that God is gracious toward us, has plans for us, wants to take care of us and bless us, and wants to listen when we pray.

10. Looking at [Deuteronomy 27-30](#) in context, and from our perspective, it's clear these are principles, not promises.

Obedience Is A Choice

11. [Deuteronomy 30:11-14, 19-20](#)

a. *"Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, 'Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it... This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."*

There Are Blessings For Obedience And Consequences For Disobedience

12. Ten times in the book of Deuteronomy (more than any other book in the Bible) God said, *"Obey me... that it might go well with you."*

13. There is a correlation between honoring God and receiving his favor, and dishonoring God and experiencing his discipline.

14. [Psalm 5:12](#) - *"For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield."*

15. [Proverbs 13:15](#) - *"... the way of transgressors is hard."* (KJV)

16. [Hebrews 12:6](#) - *"... the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

We Are All Under A Curse, But Are Redeemed And Blessed In Jesus Christ

17. **Galatians 3:13** – *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ ”*
18. **Ephesians 1:3** – *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”⁴*
19. According to **1 Peter 1:4**, we have an inheritance that will never perish, spoil, or fade, which is kept in heaven for us!
20. **Psalms 1:1-4** – *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Deuteronomy 27:1-13** to provide an overview for this study.
3. How careful are you when it comes to making choices in life?
4. Do you prayerfully ask for the Lord’s leading in the big choices?
 - a. How has the Lord answered your prayer for guidance?
5. Read and discuss **Matthew 5:45**.
 - a. Do you struggle with the fact that this verse has the appearance of being unfair and out of character for God to allow the ungodly to be the beneficiaries of his blessings?
 - b. How would you explain the biblical understanding that “bad things happen to good people” to someone who doesn’t believe in God?
 - c. Does it trouble you to know that it may take a long time for God to “balance the scales” of injustice and right every wrong?
 - d. Are you comforted by the fact that God will “make things right” at some time in the future?

⁴ In **Ephesians 1:3**, Paul quotes **Deuteronomy 21:23**.

6. Review and discuss the examples given (See #9 above) and focus on the distinction between a promise and a principle.
 - a. Has there been a time in your life when you've misinterpreted Scripture and doubted God because you didn't have a right understanding of the difference between a promise and a principle?
 - b. Use the examples in #4 A-C for further discussion.

7. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had when they saw the blessings of God directly related to obedience, as well as the "curses" of God being the consequence of disobedience.
 - a. Read and discuss [Psalm 5:12](#), [Proverbs 13:15](#), and [Hebrews 12:6](#). (See #14, 15, 16 above)

8. Read and discuss [Psalm 1:1-4](#).

9. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: know the difference between a promise God and a Scriptural principle; rely on the Lord for his leading and guidance in the big and little decisions/choices in life; thank the Lord for his salvation and deliverance from the curse of sin (have someone ready to read [Ephesians 1:3](#)) pray the Scripture; (have someone ready to read [Psalm 5:12](#) and [Psalm 1:1-4](#), and pray the Scriptures.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).