

1. For those who've been with me through this entire book, the good news is we're done with God's laws. The bad news is Moses isn't through warning us of what will happen to us when we ignore those laws. Consider that I'm preaching on obeying God's laws to my fellow "once saved, always saved" Christians. Most of Chapter 32 is Moses reciting song lyrics given to him by God Himself. Then the chapter ends with a description of how Moses is to go to end his life. It is essentially a lesson on the purpose and limitations of God's laws. What I would like you to consider is why jump from this "you're doomed if you ignore God's laws" song, to a description of how Moses will die? The good news is this lesson isn't as depressing as I've been describing it so far. All of it in effect, is a reminder of the limits and purpose of God's laws.
 - a) Let me explain: God's laws, as in the 10 Commandments are essential for us Christians as teach us how He expects us to live. They teach us what He expects of us as His followers. It also shows us the "limit" of those laws. Just as Moses who represents the law, couldn't get into the Promised Land as he himself failed to obey God's commands for his own life, so we Christians can't live the type of life God want us to live by just trying to obey these laws. Confused? Great, let me explain further.
 - b) One of the greatest obstacles that most Christians struggle with is, "What is it exactly that God wants me to do with my life now that I'm saved?" Let's be honest, most decisions we have to make are not exactly like, say one of the 10 Commandments. Most of us get that we're to make decisions based on those commandments, but most the decisions we make aren't a "Don't do that, as it's a violation of a commandment or two." I'm convinced God wants us to make the best decisions possible under the limits of these commands. It's like thinking, "Here's my situation. Assuming I don't violate any biblical laws, what's the best decision I can make for me (or my family) to make given that situation?"
 - c) OK, so what does any of that have to do with this chapter or your point? Remember what living in the Promised Land is all about: Trusting God with every aspect of our lives. It's about having joy in our lives no matter what we're dealing with at any moment. To put it another way, living as God desires means relying upon His power in order to do what we believe is His will at any moment. It's about trusting God more than our love for say, our family, success or whatever else we fill in the blank with. In Genesis, God told Abraham to offer his son. That's God asking, "Do you love Me, more than even your own son?" No I'm not saying to kill our children or anything that dramatic. The point is God's saying to us, "Do you trust Me to give you the power to accomplish what it is I want to accomplish through your life, or are you trying to please Me and others by willpower?" Relying upon His power by the Holy Spirit working through us is what He desires in the first place.
2. All of that lecturing leads us back to this chapter. Most of the chapter is a long song who's main point is effectively, "If we turn from God's desire for our lives, He'll abandon us just as we have abandoned Him by our lifestyle choices." Then we get an epilogue to the chapter discussing the fact Moses was allowed to see the Promised Land (from a mountaintop outside of it) but he was not allowed to actually enter it. Both stories teach us about what we can and can't do without His guidance and His power. Bottom line is we need to learn what God requires of us for obedience and stick close to Him for that obedience. Then and only then can we live as He desires, which is what living in the Promised Land is all about.
 - a) To state what may be obvious, there is more to the chapter than that. The reason there are 52 verses in this chapter is Moses has a lot to say to us about sticking close to God so He'll guide us for His glory. Oh, my lesson title is "Understanding how God wants us to live as a witness for Him in the world around us." OK enough lecturing on the overview of this chapter. Time to break down and discuss all the 52 verses that make up this chapter.

3. Chapter 32, Verse 1: Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
 - a) As we start, realize that from Verse 1 all the way until Verse 43 we're reading the lyrics to a song. We don't have the melody, but only the words translated into English. In the last chapter, there was a private meeting with God, Moses, and Moses successor Joshua. God gave Moses this song in that meeting. How God actually communicated this song is not stated, just that He did. Scholars refer to this song as the "Song of Moses" as God gave it to Moses as it is recorded (and translated) here in this chapter.
 - b) Before I discuss the meaning of the verses, why a song? Part of the answer is we recall the words of songs better than we can recall the words of a speech or a sermon. Consider all the songs you know by heart. There's something about a "tune" that helps us to remember the words better. While we don't have this tune today, I'm sure there have been many an effort over the millenniums to put these words to a song. Since we can't "hum it", all we can do is discuss the lyrics as translated and explain why they're here for us to study.
 - c) OK, enough background, onto the verse itself. The song begins by saying in effect, "Hey everyone, here what I (God) have to say. When the text says "listen heavens and earth" it is trying to get across in a colorful way, that this song isn't just for the Israelites that Moses is preaching to or just Israelites in general, but all people. The point of course is that all of us are accountable to God as far as obeying His commandments. As I've been saying all through Deuteronomy, the "10 Commandments" are binding upon all people. To make it simple, we instinctively know God exists and for example, stealing and murder is wrong.
 - i) The point as it relates to this song is since we accept the idea that all of us must be subject to these laws, here is a song to remind us of the importance of them.
 - ii) Before I move on, let me for the sake of the newcomers explain Christian salvation in relevance to the 10 Commandments. The short version is we Christians believe that Jesus paid the full price for every sin we've ever committed or will commit in our lifetimes. We don't obey the Commandments to "earn points" with God. We do it, as that's our guideline as to how God wants us to live as a witness for Him.
 - iii) Meanwhile, back to the song itself:
4. Verse 2: Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.
 - a) So you know, some of these lines are going to be more obvious than others. I'm not going to give a detailed study of each line. If some make obvious points either directly or by its poetic style, I can comment on it briefly and then we can move on.
 - i) For example, this verse is obviously meant to be taken poetically. The idea is to let God's words sink in the same way rain falls from the sky to help plants grow.
5. Verse 3: I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
 - a) The "I" is the person singing the song, or us as we speak of God. Let me ask a question, why do we praise God? Does it affect God if He has no need of anything by definition? Of course not. We praise God, as it's a way of us glorifying Him. It should be a way to bring us joy in our lives. To put it another way, if you want more joy in your life, take the time to praise God every so often. Ever notice that we're usually in a better mood after we have taken the time to praise God? That's what the verse is commanding us to do.
 - b) Now that we know we should praise God, what should be praise Him for? As my wife's taught me over the years, when I'm in a bad mood, stop and consider what it is in life that I'm grateful for? When we appreciate the fact we're alive to this moment, we can always be grateful for the opportunity to praise Him for giving us life itself. From there, one can always think of other things we can be grateful for, and that's what this verse is saying.
 - c) With that positive point stated, back to the song itself.
6. Verse 4: He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.
 - a) If you're in doubt what to be grateful for, Verse 4 gives some wonderful examples.

- b) Let me discuss the word "Rock". It is used a bunch of times in the Psalms to describe God. The secret to understanding that word is not to think of a rock one can fit in one's hand. Think of the "Rock of Gibraltar". The point is to think of God as a huge, unmovable object who we can always count on as always being there.
 - c) One of the things that's always fascinated me about the bible is how there's very little text arguing for God's existence. The bible just accepts God exists as a fact and then it spends a lot of space explaining who He is and what He's like in ways we can relate to. One way of describing God is the idea that "his works are perfect...just" as stated in this verse. The idea is to accept the fact that God's in control of the world He created, and even though we don't understand why many things happen, God who's in control of all things, does.
 - i) Let me pick a couple of major tragedies as examples: For example, why did God allow "9-11" to happen or any of the great mass murders of the 20th Century? The short answer is God allows evil to exist if for no other reason to prove that we as people have the power to overcome such evil as a society if we fight it. The classic question Christians have to wrestle with is, "Why does evil exist?" Consider that if one was an atheist, one would still have to wrestle with that same question. That question doesn't just disappear if one does or does not believe in God. My point is if we accept God's existence, we accept the fact that good and evil both exist in our world and God's aware of it and allows "free will" ultimately for His glory.
 - ii) So if God is so perfect and just, why does He allow such horrible things to exist? In effect to prove that He's greater than those events. By our willingness to fight and overcome evil, it allows God to show His glory through our efforts.
 - d) To state all of this another way, it's God's way of saying, "He's above all of that, He exists and He cares for us despite all the tragedies that we have to deal with in our lives". Since He desires to rescue us for all of eternity from the difficulties of this life, that makes Him a perfect and just God. OK, enough on that topic, let's move on.
7. Verse 5: They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation. ⁶ Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?
- a) We move from describing what God is like, to describing what people are like. The focus here switches from describing God to describing those who've been called to serve Him. In effect, these verses are meant as an insult to those of us called to serve God. In ancient societies, it was practically unheard of for a nation to abandon their god. Yet that's what is being described here in these verses. These verses are preaching to you and me, "Hey, God created us and made us what we are today. The only reason we get to enjoy our life today is because there's a God who created us in the first place.
 - b) OK, so what is the corruption being discussed in these verses? In the literal sense, this is describing any and all times we've turned from His desire to our own desires for our life.
 - c) Historically, the Israelites spent much of their history as a kingdom turning from God as to worship other deities. Since God knows all things and wants a personal relationship with all people, God's "writing this in advance" hopefully to get some people to turn back to Him despite the collective rejection of Him. This is God pleading with the Israelites, to collectively and individually turn back to Him despite their rejection of Him.
 - d) Suppose you say, "OK, I'm not perfect, but I go to church most Sundays and I believe that God exists. So why should I care about this stuff? After all, I can't think about God 24-7. How does this affect me?" Great question. The idea isn't that we're required to focus on God "24-7". The idea is we daily make the effort to seek Him and more importantly we do make decisions using say the "10 Commandments" as our framework of how God wants us to live in this world. If we're making the effort to seek Him daily and we do make our decisions based on those laws, then we are living as He desires. Of course none of us are perfect, which is why confession of sin is so essential to the believers life.

8. Verse 7: Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.
- a) Keep in mind this song is given to those who've been called by God (think in terms of any person who at that moment has turned from God in his or her life) to repent. This verse is saying, Hey, go find someone who "gets it" and ask them to explain the eternal benefits as well as the benefits in this lifetime of living as God desires we live.
 - b) Even as believers, we're asked to seek "elders" in our church or community when we need help on any particular issue. The head pastor of the church I currently attend announced how grateful he was fairly recently of elders who've been around the church a long time, as they've been through tough situations before and can give good perspective for tough decisions that they have to make as the current leaders.
 - c) My point here isn't so much about church, but about the fact we should never be so proud that we can't seek our own "elders" as to help draw us closer to God with whatever issue we're dealing with at the moment. That's what this verse is implying.
9. Verse 8: When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.
- a) The more one thinks about this verse, the more fascinating it is. This verse is essentially saying that the geographical boundaries on earth are based on the number of Israelites. What that exactly means, I'm not sure about. What is it saying is the land allocated all over the world is based on the literal number of Israelites.
 - b) There are times when the word "Israel" can refer to all Israelites. There are also places in the bible where it refers to all people who trust God to guide their lives. I'm convinced in this case it refers to both. In a literal sense, God's always aware of how many Israelites are in the world at any given time and if God is perfect, He knows how many believers exist at any given time. The point is we should never fear if we fell outnumbered. Since God's aware of the number of believers and unbelievers, we don't have to fear if the number of unbelievers is greater than believers. God's in control of the number of people who exist as this verse implies.
10. Verse 9: For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.
- a) Remember that "Jacob" and "Israel" both refer to the common ancestor of all Jewish people that exist. God renamed Jacob to "Israel". There's a view among bible scholars that when God refers to them as "Israel", they're being obedient and when God refers to all Israelites as being "Jacob", it's meant as a backhanded insult. The idea is the name Jacob itself refers to someone who deceives. The renaming of Jacob to Israel implies to take someone who is sinful and treating him or her as if those sins never existed (hint hint).
 - b) The underlying point of this verse is that a perfect God would know all things, and He'd know who's been called to serve Him in this life and forever. The negative tone here is all about the idea that "Jacob's been called, but has turned from God".
 - c) Let me ask the tough question, while I'm in the "neighborhood". Why would God create people who He knows in advance will spend eternity in hell? Why would He create those who He knows will reject His free gift of salvation? From our perspective, the answer's a little easier to explain: It is that people out of free will, chose to reject God. The trick is to explain it from the view of an all-knowing God. The best I can come up with, is that God gives all people the opportunity to come to Him and if we choose to reject Him out of our own free will, God allows it to occur even though He knows in advance all things.
 - d) That little discussion is relevant to this verse. It's for us to realize who's been called to be with Him forever, and what we should be doing about it in response to that calling. To use a classic joke, "I've seen the enemy. It is us". Remember this song is written to those of us who've been called to be believers, to draw us either back to God, or draw us into a closer relationship with Him. It's the simple reminder that "We are His, as the Israelites are His". The question of course, is what are we doing about it?

11. Verse 10: In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye,
- a) In this verse we get "poetic". The idea is not that God suddenly found what He lost. This refers to the fact that the Israelites were called as a nation while they were in Egypt. Over that entire country, they average less than one inch of rain per year. That's why Israelites are referred here as a nation that was found in a "barren and howling waste".
 - b) Another way to look at this verse is to consider the 40 years wandering in the wilderness. To put it simply, that area where the Israelites lived during that time was a true wasteland where it would be almost impossible to survive. Yet during that time God protected all of them and guarded them.
 - c) The reminder for you and me is before we committed our lives to serving God, we too in effect lived in a "wasteland" of having a life without a purpose of making a difference for the God who's called us to serve Him. The point is God's been guiding us all of our lives even before we realized He was guiding us.
12. Verse 11: like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.
- a) To explain this verse, I need to give a quick education on how eagles train their young to fly. When the young are ready to learn, they are thrown from the nest. The mother bird hovers around them and as they fall, the mother will catch them as if to say, "let's try that again". The point is the mother is protecting her children in flight.
 - b) The point as it relates to this poem is that while we may not realize God's working in the background of our lives, He's there guiding us and protecting us the whole time. It's like God's saying to us, "Go out and make a difference for Me and I'll protect you from harm as the mother eagle protects her children from harm." Of course that doesn't mean if we jump off a cliff, we won't die. The issue is again about using our life for His glory. If we live by the commandments as taught in this book, God promises to guide and protect us as we use our lives for His glory. Of course, we still need to make wise decisions about how we use our time for Him.
 - c) Consider the big picture here: Just as God took a large group of people out of one nation to put them in another location, so God wants to guide and protect us as He did them so many millenniums ago. Just as God wanted to guide the Israelites for His glory, so God also wants to guide our lives to make a difference for Him. That's why we get the image of a mother bird protecting her young in this verse.
13. Verse 12: The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him.
- a) This is a reminder that it's God alone that's guiding our lives. One of the greatest dangers any of us face as we go through life is to think it was only due to hard work or plain luck that we achieved success, whatever that success might be. This verse is also warning us about the danger of thinking, "I made it this far in life, just due to my hard work." When we forget the God's been guiding us through life is when we start thinking it was due to our own effort which is a form of another god.
 - b) Yes the Israelites historically turned from God to worship local deities. Those deities did represent hard work (self-reliance) or worse, thinking that their gods had to be honored in order to receive blessing in life. The point is we don't honor God to "get stuff". We honor Him as we realize He created us and the best way to live is by following His rules. This verse is here to remind us that God and God alone has been guiding our lives all the time whether we think about Him (honor Him) or not.
14. Verse 13: He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag,¹⁴ with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape.
- a) These verses are examples of how God blessed the Israelites while they were in that land.

- b) Remember that the Israelites lived in Egypt and worked hard as slaves. While they lived in the land of Israel, they got to live off what they produced. The point is those Israelites were better off financially on their own in Israel than they were in Egypt. The reason that point is here is to remind them who's been blessing them the whole time.
 - c) Like Verse 12, the issue is about not trusting in self-reliance as the only reason for success or trusting in some foreign god to bless our lives. These verses are here for the Israelites to realize that they're being blessed as God's been guiding them the whole time.
 - d) These verses also have some strange references to "honey from the rock and oil from the flinty crag". The point is bee's were able to make nests for honey on the side of rocks and olive trees were able to grow (put down roots) in places without much soil. These are just examples of how the land of Israel was able to produce for them and help the Israelites to produce products as God's helping them survive and thrive in that land.
 - e) This leads back to you and me. God wants to bless us wherever we live so we can make a difference for Him. Does that still require hard work? Of course. Even for those Israelites to harvest these products, they still had to work to get the olives and honey. The point is God's never going to just drop money in our laps. What these verses are saying is that if we're willing to trust Him, He'll make it possible for us to live as to make a difference for Him in the world around us. That's the point behind these verses.
15. Verse 15: Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior.
- a) First, I have to explain the word "Jeshurun". This is a negative for the nation of Israel that is a term of praise. However, here it's like saying, "this person grew so fat based on his or her success, that they just sat around enjoying their success and forgot about God. That of course is the danger of being blessed by God. We can sit around, enjoy our success and stop giving credit to the God who's gotten us there. That's the type of negative reputation associated with "being successful to a point of forgetting about God" that's in view here.
 - b) Notice again we get another reference to God as a "rock". The idea is God is "unmovable" like the Rock of Gibraltar. That unmovable (God doesn't change) image is what wants to guide us. It's referred to as the Rock that is our Savior as in the concept of Jesus saving us from our sins as well as God's desire to guide us through our lives.
16. Verse 16: They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. ¹⁷ They sacrificed to demons, which are not God-- gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. ¹⁸ You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.
- a) By now, you can see the pattern that this song is developing. This is about the nation of Israel describing their history in advance of what happens to them (and us) if we decide to turn from God with their lives. The underlying point is when we make the conscious decision to sin, whether we realize it or not, we're at that moment, deserting the God who made us and wants to guide our lives for His glory.
 - b) We can say, "hey I didn't make an animal sacrifice to a demon, I just wanted to do this or that, which I know is a sin". Does that make me as bad as those people? On one hand I'll argue that a "sin is a sin" and all sin draws us away from God. As Dennis Prager puts it, I'd be disappointed in a God who thinks murder is the same as a parking ticket. In terms of how it affects our lives, it is obvious that some sins are worse than others, but we have to keep in mind that God is perfect by definition, and therefore He hates any and all forms of sin that we commit.
 - c) Let me put it this way: Jesus taught effectively that whether we realize it or not, there are only two gods: The true and living god and the god of this world. (See John 12:31, 14:30.) My point is simply that while we may not offer a sacrifice to other gods, whenever we do turn from God, we are serving the god of this world. That also implies that all people are following one of two gods, whether they realize it not.

- d) So what do we do when we mess up? Confess it as sin. To confess our sins is simply to admit that God's way of doing things is right and our way of acting was wrong. Then we make the effort to turn from that way and confess that sin. God never limits us on how often we can turn from sin, but we can and do suffer the consequences of those sins as a reminder that to put it simply, sin is painful. Speaking of consequences, notice Verse 19:
17. Verse 19: The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. ²⁰ "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.
- a) Keep in mind as one reads these verses, that we're dealing with a group who refused to change their sinful lifestyle. When God says "I will hide my face from them", that's the warning as I mentioned earlier, that there is a point in life where God can say to us, "it's too late for you. I'll just watch the consequences play out at this point."
- b) Let me state that while I believe such a time can exist for any person, for those of us who have committed their lives to serving Jesus, I believe we can always turn back when we're willing to turn. To state this idea another way, if we feel guilty for something we've done, that guilt drives us back to God. What's being described here are those people who don't care about God ruling over their lives. They would rather live with all the consequences of their lifestyle than turn to the living God. I'm convinced none of us know what is that point of no return is for anyone, so I pray for the salvation of lots of people I know.
- c) We just have to be aware of the fact consequences exist for those who've made a conscious choice to turn from God all of their lives. A few more disclaimers: Paul taught in Romans Chapter 7 that there is an unknown age of accountability. My point is God holds the naïve accountable only for what they should or do know. This also teaches that God did create multitudes of people who He knew would spend eternity in hell. Because He gave us free will, that will be the lifestyle choice of many people. My point and the point here in these verses is that God's well aware of those who make the choice to turn from Him and what's going to be their eternal consequences for that lifestyle choice.
18. Verse 21: They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. ²² For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. ²³ "I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them.
- a) This is a good time to pause and recall why this song was written in the first place. It is to drive the Israelites back to the God they're called to worship. Remember Moses dedicated a good chapter or so on the dangers of turning from God's laws. In the last chapter, God told Moses that in the future, despite all of the warnings, the Israelites will turn from Him. The point is this song is here to remind them and us what are the consequences when any person does make the decision to turn from God.
- b) What if one thinks, "I believe Jesus died for all my sins, why should I worry about all this stuff?" As I've been preaching all through this book, behavior matters and I'm stating it as a "born again, once saved, always saved" believer in Jesus. The reason why He cares how we do behave is He wants us to live to make a difference for Him. It's also the best way to live out our lives as a witness for Him.
- c) All of that leads me back to these verses. The point is if we're not motivated to please God based on our gratitude for what He's done for us, we can read the consequences of what is going to happen to us if we decide to turn our lives from Him. Yes these verses are giving us warnings about hell. They're also saying we'll suffer now, if we who are called to serve God do make the decision to turn from Him, these verses are describing how we will have to pay the consequences in this lifetime. Think I'm being too harsh? Consider how guilty one feels when one does something one knows is not pleasing to Him. That's how it does begin. If we ignore God's spirit turning us back to Him, it goes downhill from there.

19. Verse 24: I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. ²⁵ In the street the sword will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men. ²⁶ I said I would scatter them and blot out their memory from mankind, ²⁷ but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the LORD has not done all this.' " ²⁸ They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them.
- a) If the previous set of verses didn't scare you enough to commit one's life to serving God, I will warn you right now, that if one considers the implication of these verses, they alone are designed to keep us on the "straight and narrow" path. It's scary to realize how literal these verses have come true when one studies the Israel's history. There is no other group as a nation that have had to suffer a great a history of tragedies as the Jewish people. The holocaust of World War II was the latest example of what's happened to them all through history. So are you saying that if they'd collectively turn to God and obeyed Him as He's demanded them to do, that Holocaust wouldn't have occurred? I don't know. I just know that God protects those He loves and are obedient to Him. The Babylonian captivity was due to their collective disobedience to Him. The Roman destruction about 700 years later was due to their collective rejection of Jesus as He Himself stated in Luke 19:44.
 - b) Let me also state the history of the Jewish people has not always been horrid. If one looks at the history of Pulitzer award winners for writing, or the Nobel award winners since the awards started less than 100 years ago, the percentage of Jewish winners as compared to the Jewish percentage as of the whole population is amazing. Just consider the number of United States Senators and Congressmen who are Jewish by birth, that alone is proof that God desires to bless that nation. My point is God has blessed them as a nation and He has cursed them when they've collectively turned from worshipping Him as God.
 - c) Ok, so what does all of that history mean to us as Christians? Do we have to live as say Orthodox Jewish people live? No. The issue is if we believe Jesus died for all our sins, we are required (yes required) to do something about it. That's why living as God demands is an issue for us Christians as we're called to be His witnesses to the world around us.
 - d) As to these verses, I could go into some pretty grim detail from bible history as well as the history of the Jewish people over the last 3,000 years, but hopefully you get the point so I don't have to go into such details. To sum all this up in one point, if we desire to have all the blessings in this lifetime based on our trust in Jesus, we must also accept the fact there will be consequences if we decide to turn from the God who wants to guide our lives for His glory. The shorter version is we too can suffer the consequences described here if we fail to use our lives to make a difference for God.
 - e) OK, this chapter is tough enough as it is, without me making it worse. Let's move on:
20. Verse 29: If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!
- a) Loose translation: If only people would honor the God who created them in the first place they wouldn't be in so much trouble. I'm convinced that God's given all people the ability to understand that a single creator exists who made all things. We also instinctively know that murder and stealing is wrong. We also figure out we're at our best when we take the time to rest every now and then. My point is honoring God can be instinctive. When we get more knowledge than that of the fact God Himself (Jesus) paid the complete price for our sins, also makes us accountable for that knowledge.
 - b) The easy thing to do is to point to our unsaved friends and say, "They just don't get it" and they'll suffer. The real issue is what we are doing with our lives. We don't get any points for how many people are saved. God calls us to be a witness for Him. Who actually gets it, is in effect God's problem and not ours. Ours is to be a witness for Him, which is what this song is reminding us as we go through it.

21. Verse 30: How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up?
- a) Picture one man being able to chase off a 1,000 other people. If one studies the tragedies of the Jewish people through history, often they outnumbered their enemies. However in times when they've collectively turned from God, the Israelites suffered even though they greatly outnumbered those groups that have attacked them.
 - b) Again we get the references to God as a "rock", and the word LORD in all capitals, which refers to the most holy name of God that means, "I am that I am". The point is if one goes and studies history, it's pretty obvious of the times God's been against Israel as well as the times God's been with them.
 - c) This leads me to consider the modern nation of Israel. If you study world history, there's never been a group of people who were conquered, scattered and formed a nation again. The exception is the Israelites, who did it after the Babylonian captivity, and again, within the last 100 years. What's amazing to consider is the prophet Isaiah predicted when God gathers the Israelites a second time from around the world, that's when they'll collectively worship Him as God. (See Isaiah 11:11). I'll argue that's what been happening since they became a country again as I believe we're close to God's "wrap up" of the world.
 - d) Meanwhile the point of this verse is that if one wants proof of God's existence, all one has to do is consider the history of the Israelites. Both their positive and negative history as I have been stating in this lesson is proof of God's existence and how His word as described here in this chapter has come literally true to date.
22. Verse 31: For their rock is not like our Rock, as even our enemies concede.
- a) I recall back when I was in graduate school I had a classmate who was Muslim. He was aware of the high percentage of United States Congressmen and Senators who were from a Jewish background. The point is it's pretty obvious even to those who hate the Israelites how God has watched over that nation all through their history. I'm not saying my friend hated Jewish people. He was just aware of how God's blessed that nation.
23. Verse 32: Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are filled with poison, and their clusters with bitterness. ³³ Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras. ³⁴ "Have I not kept this in reserve and sealed it in my vaults? ³⁵ It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."
- a) To understand these verses, first one has to understand the word translated "their" at the beginning of Verse 32. Even in Verse 31, it is fairly obvious that the writer is talking about enemies of the Jewish people.
 - b) The next thing to grasp is we're not talking about the enemies of Israel literally being from the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were towns destroyed by God in Genesis 19 as examples to us of what happens to a person or a group that turns from God.
 - c) This is a classic example of 'I have faults but I'm not as bad as them'. These verses do give us a reminder that while we may suffer in this lifetime when we turn from God, that's still a lot better than the eternal consequences of those who've never turned to God in the first place. While we may see non God-fearing people enjoy this life, we have to realize what's their eternal fate for turning from Him in the first place.
 - d) Over the last few pages, I gave some historical examples of proof of God's existence. Now that we have that evidence, consider it as one makes the lifestyle choices we make. Jesus stated in effect that the road to heaven is narrow and few find it. (See Matthew 7:13-14). My point is most people choose to maximize their pleasure in this lifetime without having to consider the eternal consequences of those choices. I'm convinced it's better to use our lives to make a difference for God now, than it is to maximize the pleasure of this lifetime. All of that is obvious here as God's describing the eternal wrath to be poured out on those who've chosen to turn from God in this lifetime.

24. Verse 36: The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free.
- a) Keep in mind that God through Moses has just spent the last few dozen verses putting down the Israelites to say in effect, "Don't turn from Me, or you'll suffer big time". After all of that, we get Verse 36 that effectively says God will have compassion on His servants when they've got no other options.
 - b) One thing one learns as a Christian is God does His best work when we've used up all our options. That way God and He alone gets the credit for helping us through life. Then we praise God as we realize that He alone got us through those situations.
 - c) So am I saying, sell all of your possessions and then God will guide us through life? No. I'm just saying God does His best work when He knows we've run out of options. I have lost count of the number of times I've seen this come true just in my lifetime. So do I then stop trying to earn a living or help those around me? Again, the answer is no. My point's simply that God doesn't like to share the credit with anyone. Therefore, coming back to the Israelites, even after all of the tragedies they've suffered as a nation for millennia, if they're willing to turn to God for the forgiveness of sins, it's never too late to use one's life to make a difference for Him.
 - d) Of course we should start now as that's the best way to live. That's why I never give up on prayer for anyone as I know God can and does work with anyone willing to give their lives over to Him.
25. Verse 37: He will say: "Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in,"³⁸ the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter!
- a) You have to love the jumping back and forth between the "trust God and He'll help us" in contrast to the other message of "look how much trouble we'll be in when we collectively turn from Him with our lives". In the last verse we had a reference to "turn back to God" and here we get another reference to the idea of "You trust in your other so-called god? Let's see if those other gods help you in your hour of need."
 - b) What if you say I don't worship any god? We all do. Where one spends their spare time or their income is a good example of what someone's god is. It could be money, fame, or power. It could be following a celebrity. My simple point is we become like what we do worship and everybody worships something whether they realize it or not.
 - c) So if we realize we're chasing the wrong dream, what next? Glad you asked, Verse 39:
26. Verse 39: "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.
- a) My loose translation of Verse 39: It's never too late to turn to God as in reality there's no other "entity" that can help us both eternally and in this lifetime than God Himself. It's to realize God's in control of all things. The same God that can write the history of Israelites before any of it occurs, knows exactly how long each of us will live and what's best for our lives. It's about realizing, why are wasting so much time pursuing things that won't make a difference for eternity? As I love to preach, time is the most valuable thing we own and we're going to be accountable to God on how we use that time.
 - b) Loose translation #2: Follow God or whether we realize it or not, we're in big trouble.
27. Verse 40: I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever,⁴¹ when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate.⁴² I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh: the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders."
- a) Since there is no one higher than God, He can only swear by Himself, which is essentially what Verse 40 is saying. The other verses are reminding us that even though it appears that the "bad guys" are winning, it's only for this lifetime at the most that they win. Those who choose to turn from God will suffer in this lifetime and for eternity.

- b) OK, after preaching "stick close to God" for many pages now, what's left to say? This song is ending with a reminder that God's still there, He's still judging people and it's far better to use one's time to make a difference for Him in this lifetime, then to only pursue gain for one's self or one's family. That's the poem in a nutshell. If that "nice tone" version doesn't cut it for you, the "tougher tone" is visible in these verses with colorful expressions like "I will make my arrows drunk with blood" and "my sword devours flesh". If that won't get you to stick close to God, I don't know what will.
28. Verse 43: Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.
- a) The final verse of the song reminds those of us who are trusting in God that He'll win in the end. God will on His timing, take care of those wanting to do us harm.
- b) I've actually used this principal in tough situations. When I have to deal with someone in a situation that could turn ugly, I've learned to turn that situation over to God. We have to trust in His promise that He'll "avenge our enemies" when we're facing tough situations in life. I also remember the principal of repeating back key points of what the other party is saying so they know they've been heard. When we work to "soften" tough situations, I find God does wonders to help us through those situations. That's why I trust in God to take the lead in those who've done wrong to me as opposed to lashing out at others. Am I perfect? Of course not, but I've done my best when I "get out of the way" to let God deal with the situation at hand.
- c) Congratulations, you've made it with me through this 43-verse song. The bad news is we still have 9 verses left in this chapter. Bear with me while I finish it and tie it all together.
29. Verse 44: Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people.⁴⁵ When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel,⁴⁶ he said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.⁴⁷ They are not just idle words for you--they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."
- a) Here we get the "wrap up" of the song. The text states that Moses and Joshua spoke all of the words of this song to the large assembled crowd. Moses is trying to emphasize that in order to help the Israelites to not to turn away from God, they're to memorize this song as a motivation to stick close to Him. Again, try to visualize about 2,000,000 people gathered in a huge camp. I picture Moses standing somewhere in a natural amphitheatre setting as this large crowd could understand what was said.
- b) Consider that this second generation of Israelites never as a whole rebelled against God's demand for them to conquer that land. My point is since this song was read to them and since they generally obeyed Moses and Joshua as they're leaders, "it worked". My point is simply that we can live as God desires, but the secret to Christian living is to daily spend time in His word as it reminds us to trust Him through our lives. If you study the period of time after Joshua past away, that's when life went downhill for the Israelites. I'll argue that's when they started to not collectively read this book or recite this song and as stated in the book of Judges a lot, "everyone did whatever they wanted to do" (paraphrasing.)
- i) My point is essentially the same as Moses' point here: That is, be careful to obey what is written in God's law. Make it a daily part of our lives and that will help us to live, as God desires we live. To state my book theme again, "Behavior matters" and I'm saying that as one who believes Jesus died for every sin I'll ever commit in the past or in the future.
- ii) That leads me back to my lesson theme. If behavior matters, then we need to rely upon God's power in order to live, as He desires. Living as God desires requires us to do more than just read the bible and pray. We need to ask God to guide us so we can make a difference for Him. My point is God wants to give us His power to make that difference for Him. That just means praying for His guidance.

- iii) Let me explain that a little better. We associate Moses with God's laws. His laws are a good thing as they give us guidelines as to how to live as He desires. Moses wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land as "symbolically speaking", living as hard as we can to obey the law isn't enough. We need to rely upon God's power in order to live as He desires. There's no magic to this. It's about simply praying for God to lead us to do as He desires. Then when it comes to making tough decisions we trust He's guiding us as He promises the Spirit will live within those of us who are trusting in Jesus as full payment of our sins. That's why God calls us to spend daily time in prayer and His word so that the Spirit can guide us as He desires.
 - iv) OK, enough of that. Time to finish the chapter.
30. Verse 48: On that same day the LORD told Moses, ⁴⁹ "Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. ⁵⁰ There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. ⁵¹ This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. ⁵² Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."
- a) The actual "death scene" of Moses is in the final chapter of this book, (the next lesson). In these final verses we get a preview of that scene here we read of what Moses has to do to end his life. I have to admit that if I was told go over there so you can die", I would take my time and stall as long as I can. My point is Moses was cooperative with God's request not because he was 120 years old and "had enough", but Moses got the idea that living in obedience to God is the best way to live. That includes how Moses was supposed to end his life as well. Let's be honest, God doesn't say to us, "Go do this and that, as that will be a wrap up for your life". Instead He effectively says to us, live as I desire you live and let me worry about when your time is up. If we're trusting God with our lives, then we also have to trust Him with our deaths as well, as Moses did here.
 - b) Time for a few words on the specifics. Israel as a land is about the same size as the state of New Jersey. My point is if one climbed up a mountain just opposite of that country, it would be possible to view most or all of it from that mountain. The mountain Moses was told to go climb is east of that land, but had that kind of a panoramic view.
 - c) The symbolic point of course is God's laws can get us "close" to living as He desires, but we still require His spirit to live as He desires. That's why I just lectured all of us on the importance of asking the Holy Spirit to guide our lives. Moses great sin as I've stated in a bunch of earlier lectures was he hit the rock that God asked him to speak to (Numbers 20). All I'm saying is Moses blew the model of not crucifying Jesus over and over again as we are to speak to Him to guide our lives not make Him suffer more than once for our sins.
 - d) Paul taught this point as he states Jesus is a model of the rock that Moses struck more than one time, which was the "unforgivable sin" that prevented Moses from entering that land. (I'm not saying Moses isn't saved, just that his death is a model for us that we can't live as God desires by willpower to try to obey His laws.) For some New Testament references to Jesus as that rock, see Romans 9:33, 1st Corinthians 10:4 and 1st Peter 2:8.
 - e) Therefore the key point of these last set of verses is that Moses, like his brother Aaron got close to God by living as God commanded they lived, but it took the death of Jesus for us to have God's power to live as He desires which is what the Promised Land is all about.
31. As to Moses final words, we'll get to that in the next lesson as we wrap up this book. Thanks for sticking with me through this long lesson about obedience to God, and learning to rely upon His power in order to live as God desires we live. I promise the next lesson is more upbeat as we will read of Moses giving a final blessing upon the nation of Israel as well as reading of Moses big "death scene" to end this book. With that said, let me close in prayer.

32. Father, living as You desire is a constant reminder that Jesus paid the complete price for our sins and there is nothing we can do to add to that price. At the same time, You do desire we live in obedience to Your laws not to "earn points" with You, but simply because that's the best way for us to be a witness for You. You've called us into a life of obedience to You out of gratitude for the salvation You've given us. May we rely upon Your power to live as You desire so we can use our lives to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.