

Deuteronomy Chapter 6 – John Karmelich

1. In the last lesson, I stated that all of Old Testament laws, outside of the 10 Commandments were fulfilled in Christ. If we believe Jesus is in charge of our lives and died for every sin we will ever commit, why should I read study the details about God's laws? Let's assume we're grateful for a "10 Commandment" lesson as it reminded us how God wants us to live. If the rest of this book is essentially a bunch of rules and regulations that Jesus fulfilled for us, tell me again why should I keep reading?
 - a) To answer, let me start by saying, Jesus said there are two commandments in the law that all believers in God should obey. The first is in Deuteronomy Chapter 6. It is considered the most famous of God's commands and is often printed "everywhere" for Jewish people to remind themselves to obey God. That commandment for those who don't know says, we have to love God with all of our hearts, souls and minds. The other law Jesus says the law "hangs on", is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). OK John, I sort of know that. So again, even if that command is in this chapter, why should I read further?
 - b) The answer to that question, leads to my lesson title, the single word: Blessing. What we read in Chapter 6 is effectively God wants to bless us if we're obedient God's laws. Since we as Christians can't earn God's love by being more obedient to Him, why bother? Why should be obedient to Him if our salvation depends upon our trust that Jesus paid the full price for our sins? In other words, how are we blessed by obedience?
 - c) To answer, let's remember what the "Promised Land" represents for Christians: It's about living our lives on earth the way God wants us to live. The Israelites that Moses is talking to are literally less than a month away from entering the Promised Land that God wants them to conquer. Fighting a war can fill us with fear as we don't know whether or not we will live through it. A purpose of Deuteronomy is to help those Israelites think past their fears and realize the blessings they'll receive for obeying God. The reason we are to enter our own mental "Promised Land" is about overcoming our own fears of what will happen to us in the future and trust that God will bless us by obedience.
 - d) My point is that God wants to bless our lives. Not just eternally, but here and now. So we can receive that blessing first we have to learn to trust Him for all aspects of our lives. Of course we're saved by our trust in Jesus. I'm not denying that. I'm just saying our lives should be more than just being saved. It should be used to make a difference for God. To make that difference, first we have to trust Him to face our fears of what can happen to us in the future. To say it another way, to be blessed by God is about trusting Him to guide our lives so He can use them for our glory. Our faith that God will bless our lives is what living in the Promised Land is all about for Christians.
2. That speech leads me back to back to Deuteronomy Chapter 6. God's saying in this chapter if we want to be blessed by Him, here is what we have to do. It begins by realizing God is the only one we should worship and we should worship Him with "all we have. The chapter then goes on to explain how we're blessed by worshipping God that hard. It explains the benefits the Israelites will receive by trusting Him that much as well as explaining to us the benefits we receive if we're willing to trust Him that much. To sum it all up, if we would like to be blessed by the God who created everything, pay attention to what is said in this chapter. It teaches how God blesses us.
 - a) The rest as we say is the details. There are only 25 verses in this chapter, but be warned there are a lot of implications about how we're to live, what God is, and what He expects of us in this chapter. In fact both Jesus and Paul quote this chapter several times. If this chapter is important enough for them to recite, I'll argue that it's important enough for us to learn what it is that's important about this chapter and why we should study it. With that said, let's start the verse by verse commentary and see how we get blessed by God.

3. Chapter 6, Verse 1: These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.
- a) To explain how the chapter starts, let me first remind us where we left off. The last lesson stated the 10 Commandments for the second time in the bible. The rest of the chapter was an "epilogue" where Moses reminded the Israelites "what else happened" roughly 40 years earlier after God gave them those commandments. The short version is the Israelites went back to where they lived as they wanted God to speak only to Moses. Then the Israelites agreed to obey God based on what He taught Moses. The key question then becomes, ok, what did God teach Moses then? The answer is effectively the rest of Deuteronomy.
 - b) That leads us to Chapter 6. God told Moses much more than just the 10 Commandments. If that were it, we'd be done with the book. Moses is stating there are lots of commands to be obeyed as well as rules to be followed. To sum it up, if you want to live as God desires we live, obey what is in this book. Notice the emphasis is not just so these specific people get to be blessed but also their children and their grandchildren. (In ancient Hebrew there was no word for grandchildren, just "children's children"). Again remember the Promised Land is all about being blessed by God. He's saying that if we trust in God and obey these rules we will be blessed with a long life as will the children that come after us.
 - c) Does this mean every single Israelite hearing this speech lived to say, 100 and got to have lots of children and grandchildren? Of course not. Ask yourself, what do I live for? Why do I want to get up in the morning? What is the purpose of my life? If you say or think it is to bless God and make a difference for Him, you've found the greatest purpose to live that one can have. The great question of life is not how long you get to live, but what did you and I do with the time God has given us? No matter how long any of us get to live, at the end it always seems short. Long life is about looking back at it and realizing we used the time God gave us to make a difference for Him. If this is a new concept for you to use one's life to make a difference for God, just remember we can't change our past, just learn from it to make a difference using whatever time we have left. The main point here is that we can have a blessed life if we learn to think in terms of God first, then others then what it is we have to do for ourselves. The classic Christian summary is the acronym "J.O.Y". It stands for Jesus, others, and finally ourselves. Learning to think and live that way is how God blesses us and the purpose of the lesson. That's how we have joy in our life.
 - d) So does this mean I have to obey every rule God gives me in order to please Him? I view it by thinking in terms of "God rescued me from a life of sin, so out of gratitude for what He's done for me, I want to use my time for His glory". Of course one cannot keep all of these laws fresh in our mind, so Moses is going to narrow it down to a key rule to keep in mind that we'll get to in Verse 4. In the meantime, here in the introduction, Moses says to his audience (those Israelites as well as you and me) to pay attention to what God says we are to do as we will be blessed by paying attention. Not only will we be blessed but also our family and descendants that come after us. That's the point of these verses. Time to move on:
4. Verse 3: Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.
- a) In both Verse 3 and Verse 4, it begins with "Hear O Israel". That means, "pay attention as what I'm about to say is important stuff." I said this lesson is about being blessed by God and I mean it. God promised the Israelites a land flowing with "milk and honey". As the famous children's Veggie Tales cartoon used to say, "It sounds sticky" describing those 2 things. If you think about it, neither milk nor honey flows from rocks. Therefore it must mean more than something literally flowing from the ground.

- b) Think of milk as a staple of life. Young children and babies need milk in order to survive. I see that aspect is describing God's land as a good place to raise animals that produce the milk humans and animals need for nutrition. Honey is considered a luxury item as it isn't a necessity but something sweet if harvested correctly. Think of the land of Israel as being a good place to grow fruit and plants that attract the bees that make honey. In summary, the promised land will give us plenty of what we need and plenty of blessings if we trust and obey God with the time we have to live out our lives.
- c) What's also an underlying point is that God's reputation is on the line. He made promises to the ancestors of these Israelites that He would bless their descendants if they're willing to trust Him with their lives. The point for us as Christians is we too, get to inherit all that God can possibly give us if we're willing to trust Him with our lives. In other words these blessings aren't just for literal Israelites, they are for everyone and anyone willing to trust God with their lives and willing to be obedient to what He demands of us. Ok, what is it He demands of us? Remember the whole 10 Commandment speech of the last lesson? It is a good start. However, to keep it even simpler to understand how God wants to bless our lives, the next two verses are the key one's of this chapter, and I encourage you to go memorize them as most religious Jews can recite them off the top of their heads.

5. Verse 4: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

- a) Verse 4 is called the "Shema" in Hebrew. That word literally means "to hear" as in the first word in Verse 4. At this point I need to explain Verse 4 carefully as there is a lot to learn about it. First, let me discuss the word "Israel". Yes it's literally referring to the Israelites listening to Moses' speech as well their descendants. However, God is not just interested in spending eternity with Israelites, but with all people willing to obey Him on His terms.
- b) To put it another way, if heaven is God's domain, then He gets to decide who will be with Him for eternity. We can't prove our love to God, so we trust in Jesus complete payment for every sin we'll ever commit. Even with that said, God not only wants to bless us in the next life, but here in this life. That blessing comes when we use our lives in order to make a difference for Him in this world. It starts by realizing God is calling us as well as those Israelites to use our life for His glory. Also don't be thrown by the word "Israel". Realize what that word means, "to struggle with God". The idea is we struggle to please God as we have to battle doing our will versus God's will. Therefore, when we let go and agree to let God guide our lives, He will bless us.
- c) Next I want to talk about the word LORD in all capitals. This is God's most holy name. It literally means, "I am that I am". That phrase was God's response when Moses asked God what is His name. The point is, God is who He is. We can't fully understand all He does or what He is, we just have to accept that He is, what He is. If you get that, you get the idea of "Jehovah" as it is often written out in English.
- d) Now for the important part: the idea that God is "One". First, one needs to understand in the Hebrew Language, there's more than one word for "one". There's a word used when one wants to express a single one like "I am one of many". Then there is another word for one as in a compound one. To give a biblical example, the bible states that when a man and women get married, they become "one flesh". (From Genesis 2:24). My point is the "one" of "one flesh" is a compound one like two becoming one.
 - i) Another example from Genesis is in the creation account. Each day in that account describes a time of morning and evening that make up one day. My point is that use of "one" in each day is a compound of the morning and evening.
 - ii) Now that I've pounded that point in our heads, guess which use of the word "one" is used Deuteronomy Chapter 6, Verse 4? Of course, the compound "one". What I am getting at is there is a hint of the trinity even in the use of the word "one" as it is used in this verse. Therefore as Christians, don't let the "one" bother you.

- e) If the fact that the word "one" is a compound one (more than one thing being combined to make up a "one") also realize we get another clue in that verse. Let me state it again here: It reads, "The LORD our God, the LORD is one". I already talked about what "LORD" in all capitals means. That refers to God's name or "I am that I am". I beat to death what the word "one" means. The only other key word is the word "God". That's the word "Elohim" in the Hebrew. My job here is not to teach you Hebrew, but to understand that Elohim is also a "plural" compound. In Hebrew, the word "El" refers to a single God. Elohim refers to a plural compound that makes up the "one" that is God.
 - f) Let me make it simple. You don't have to learn Hebrew to understand this principal. All we have to realize is that when we recite the phrase "God is one", realize we're talking of a "plural" one of two or more things being so united, they are in effect one thing.
 - g) There, I just gave you a lesson to explain the "Trinity" without using that word. You may or may not realize that the word "Trinity" does not appear anywhere in either the Old or the New Testament. It is a term the church created in order to explain how God can be in heaven, on earth (through what Jesus did) and on the earth today as God's spirit works in our lives to make a difference for Him. The point is both the Old and New Testament say God is "one", but that "One" is a compound of things united as one.
 - h) Hopefully you've got the idea by now and we can move on. I always assume my readers are already Christians. Therefore, the reason to know Verse 4 is to remind ourselves that to be blessed by God is also to remind us we're to serve Him and Him alone. That is why religious Jewish people will recite this verse twice per day as a ritual. Do they think about the compound aspect of God? No, but they do want to be blessed by God and that starts by realizing "God is one" which is the main purpose of understanding Verse 4.
6. Now that I've beaten that verse to death, it's time to talk about Verse 5. Let me state it again here: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
- a) The logical question is if we realize God is in charge of our lives and He is the only God that exists, what do we do about it? The answer is Verse 5. Let me put this another way, if the 10 Commandments is too much to memorize, then just remember Verse 5. My point is if we love God with all our heart, soul and strength, then we would just naturally want to put Him first and always in our lives and put the needs of others as priority over our own needs. There is a classic Christian expression that goes, "Love the Lord your God as hard as you can, and then go do what you want." That means if we love God that much, it would just come natural to us to obey Him. That's why religious Jewish people do recite twice per day the "Shema" (hear oh Isreal, the Lord our God is one). It's to regularly keep fresh in one's mind that we're to worship God and keep Him in mind.
 - b) The great failure of the history of Israel was their failure to do this. The same mistake can be made by any Christian when we try to obey God on our own strength. My point is the Bible is full of examples of how impossible it is to obey Him without having His power to do so in the first place. With that statement made, it's time for me to talk about what God meant by the words, "heart, soul and strength". By the way realize that Jesus Himself was asked what was the greatest of the commandments, He recited these verses as being key.
 - i) My point is if you don't think these verses are necessary to learn as Christians, you can "take it up with the boss Himself". If Jesus says these verses are the key to live as He desires we live, who am I am to argue?
 - c) Again, before I discuss what heart, soul and strength mean, realize we're not saved by our trust in God by obeying Him that "hard". We're saved by trusting that Jesus never sinned and He alone fulfilled all of the law's requirements through what He did on the cross. I'll be the first to state I know I'm going over the basics again, but the mistake we constantly make as Christians is we wrongly think, "God must be mad at me because I committed a sin today." None of us are perfect. This is only about how we're to be witnesses for Him.

- d) OK, enough of that. What does Moses mean by loving God with all of our heart, soul and strength mean? Each of those terms have separate meanings, and I want to explain them to us so we understand the difference.
- i) First, let's talk about the heart. Moses is not talking about the physical organ. The heart refers to "all that is within us". It would be like me convincing you the right thing is to do "that", so you do "that" because you're now convinced it is the right thing to do at this moment. In this particular case, the issue is loving God because we believe we should. Therefore, we do it, as much as we can because we believe it is right thing to do.
 - ii) Next term is our soul. Those who don't believe God exists don't believe we have a soul. They just say when we die, our conscious loses thought and that's it for our lives. Let me explain our soul this way. Suppose you put a computer or a smart phone on a scale and weighed it. It would weigh a specific amount of pounds and ounces. Let's now say you download a whole bunch of programs on that machine. Does it weigh any more now? Of course not.
 - a) To use another example, if we write a whole bunch of reports and keep the reports on our computer, does the machine weigh any more? No and that is my point. The real YOU is like that information. They're there as we can turn on our computer and recall them. Yet those machines don't add any weight being loaded with reports.
 - b) My point is the "real you" can't die because we have no weight. When we do "die", our soul is transferred to "God's world" where we'll either be with Him forever or banned from His presence forever. God can't un-create the things He has created. That's why we live forever.
 - iii) So does this mean animals and plants live forever? I would argue that animals do have a conscious because they do what they have to do to survive. However that falls under the heart category, not the soul category. Let me use a crude example here: A dog may "hump the leg" of a person, because a dog doesn't know better. A civilized person resists the urge to do what comes natural as we humans don't act on every natural impulse we have.
 - a) The point is even back before the age of computers, people got this. Most people understand the idea of an "inner being" with no weight that could live forever, because it has no weight.
 - iv) Coming back to the verse itself, we should love God as much as possible based on our physical ability to do so as well as based on how a civilized, person should act. Think about training a dog to do a trick. The dog will do the trick because it wants a reward (either food or say to be petted) for cooperating. However that dog does the trick based on it's "heart" (inner being) and not it's soul. Our soul can do what God wants us to do not to be "petted", but just because we believe the right thing to do is what is "civil". To try another example, a "civil" person doesn't steal as our conscious tells us it is wrong. An "uncivilized" person can be like a dog, who just does something based on it's feelings without worrying about the consequences.
 - v) Since I'm bringing up the issue of pet's, let me ask, "are there animals in heaven?" Well the bible describes Jesus returning on a horse, so I wonder if that horse is an eternal being. The answer is the bible is silent on that question, so I don't know. I like the answer Billy Graham gave to that question: "If you don't want to live for all of eternity without your dog or cat, I'm sure God can make it possible if its your desire is to be with God and your animal forever. He doesn't want you miserable for all of eternity, therefore, God who can do anything can make it possible". My answer is paraphrased, but you get the point. Meanwhile, I've described what is meant by the heart and soul, and now comes the word "strength".

- vi) The final part of this verse is to love God with all of our strength. Think of it as saying, "our inner being knows it's the right thing to do to love God" and at the same time, our natural being should love God as well. Therefore if what comes naturally should love Him and our eternal being loves Him, let's also love Him as hard as we can. That represents our strength.
- vii) OK John, you love to lecture us that we can't think about God all the time, and our natural instinct to do "what we want" as opposed to what God wants tends to kick into gear every now and then. We all know we can't think about God all the time. If none of us are perfect, why should I try to please Him as much as possible if we can't be perfect? The great and constant mistake made through history was trying to please Him based on "what's inside of us". The reason the "Trinity" teaches the concept of a Spirit of God (i.e., the Holy Spirit) is so that we have His power to do what we can't do based on our own strength. When we believe Jesus died for our sins by coming in the flesh to do so, the proof that we believe is that God gives us the ability to do what He desires by His power working through us to obey Him.
- viii) In other words, God gives us the power so that our soul, our natural ability and our strength can make a difference for Him. If all of that is true, how did some in the Old Testament obey Him? There are times when the Spirit of God did work in the lives of people. There are also things we can do through our strength to make it simple. My point is if we try hard enough, we can do certain things.
- ix) OK then, if all we have to do is ask God to use our lives to work through us, why do we bother to love Him with all of our heart (inner natural being) soul (the part of us that lives forever and our strength? The answer is God works through those three things if we're willing to turn them over to Him in the first place. The reason a religious Jewish person will recite this verse twice a day is to remind him or her self of the importance of keeping one's focus on God. The fault of this system can be a failure to trust in God's power to do so. My point is we can think, "OK, it's up to us to make that difference" instead of thinking of God working through us as to make that difference.
- x) Finally, now that we understand heart, soul and strength, let me talk a little about when Jesus quoted this verse. Jesus said that we're to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? Was Jesus adding to Deuteronomy? I'd say no, but He's explaining it in a way for His audience to understand better. Remember that Jesus spoke in Aramaic, which is a dead language and similar to the Hebrew language. My point is "mind" is covered in the original three of heart soul and strength, but Jesus added it to make the point of "giving it all we got" when we think about it. References to Jesus' quotes of this verse: Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30 & Luke 10:27.
- e) OK, Final thoughts on this verse and then we'll move on. If the Israelites were unable to obey God that perfectly without the Holy Spirit's guidance, why does Jesus command us to love God that much? Remember that Jesus said He didn't come to "kill" the law, but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17). The point is that law is still "on the books" and God desires we do love Him that way. The secret of living the Christian life is to remember, "Christianity comes with an engine", which is the Holy Spirit's power for us to live that way.
- f) Therefore, my question is, does God want us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength? Of course. However, our salvation doesn't depend upon it, our witness for Him in this lifetime is dependant upon Him. We're only saved by trusting in what Jesus did do for us. Our eternal "rewards" are based on being a good witness for Him and that begins with loving God that much, because we want to, not because we have to. Consider this from God's perspective: He loves us so much He wants to spend eternity with us. He desires we love Him as much as possible out of our own free will. Loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength is what He desires we do to be a witness for Him.

7. Verse 6: These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
- a) In case you hadn't noticed, there are other verses in this chapter too! After two and a half pages describing the verse known as the "Shema" (hearing), it's time to move on to the rest of the chapter. If you think that it's just "me" that's obsessed with the last two verses, then notice how obsessed God is with it through Moses. The key point of these three verses is that God wants us to take them so seriously, He wants us to think about it all the time and tell our children how important these verses are to us.
 - b) Does that mean that literally every conversation we have should be on those two verses? No. It does mean we keep our focus upon God all the time. As I love to say, "God wants to be #1 on a list of 1". That means God wants to be a part of every aspect of our lives. He wants to think about Him all the time and gives some ideas here on how to keep our focus on Him all the time. If we discuss God when we're sitting around our home or going to a specific destination, we'd have our focus on Him all the time. Does this mean we can't get any work done as we're busy thinking about how to please Him all the time? No, again it gets back to the concept of being #1 on a list of 1. It means we "take God with us" to go do whatever we're doing.
 - c) Let me now discuss Verse 8 quickly. Among the Orthodox Jews, it was common to wear a little box on one's wrist or around one's forehead with a little scripture in it. That was a Jewish way of taking these verses literally. In fact Jesus even complained that Pharisees would make "large boxes" to carry, to act religious but they failed to just trust in Jesus as the complete payment of one's sins as opposed to wrongly trusting in their own ability to please God based on their actions. So do Christians need to make these items? Of course not. However, God wants us to keep our focus upon Him and make Him a part of every aspect of our lives, and having our own reminders often can help us do that.
 - d) Verse 9 talks about placing the "Shema" on the doorframe of one's home. If one has ever been to the home of an Orthodox Jewish person, one will find a little sign written in the Hebrew language that contains the "Shema" verse. If there are any entrepreneurs reading this verse, I have a suggestion to sell to Christians: Sell as a package with same sign and a sign in English that reads, "No, but the God that I worship is". One of my favorite teachers keeps that on his door and it's a great conversation piece for his Jewish friends to ponder.
 - e) Before I move on, let me emphasize again, that none of these things are requirements for Christians to do. We're not more saved by doing any of these things. However, having a heart for God means we care about our relationship with Him. Having "signs" or habits that help us keep our focus upon Him is a good way to help us remember that He is to be the focus of our lives. Remember again the greatest purpose one can have for this life is to use it to make a difference for God in all that we do. Because we easily get our minds off of what God desires we do, having reminders can help us get our focus upon Him.
8. Verse 10: When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, ¹² be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- a) Time to get back to the generation of Israelites listening to Moses' speech for a moment: They're about to enter the physical land of Israel with the purpose of conquering it. When the battles are over, they will inherit cities and houses already built up. A reason to bring that up here is to help them overcome their fears of what could happen to them in a war. It is a reminder that God wants to bless them for their efforts to trust Him in every aspect of their lives.

- b) While I'm literally talking about that generation, let me remind us again of why God did command them to kill every last living person in Israel at that time. First, God didn't call on the Israelites to kill every person they ever encountered. This was a specific judgment on a specific nation. As I've stated many times, Genesis 15:13 says that God will give the people living there "400 years to repent and then it's too late". The point is those living in that land grew corrupt beyond hope. Their lives included the practice of sacrificing their children to their false gods. It's like killing a wounded horse as that's the most merciful thing one can do. The Israelites were God's instrument of judgment on those who lived in that land before the Israelites conquered it. Just as God used the Babylonians (Iraq) to be His instrument of judgment on the Israelites centuries later when they too were adopting many of the same wicked practices that those original inhabitants of that land adopted.
 - i) So how does that excuse killing say innocent babies? If there is no next life, that is a very unfair thing to do. If there is a next life, then God eternally saves those who didn't know any better and judges those who instinctively know, that to go kill an innocent life is wrong to offer it up to any God.
 - ii) Bottom line is God is encouraging the Israelites to have the boldness to go forward to enter this land and kill all of its inhabitants as part of His judgment upon those who lived there at that time. Their reward for that action was that they got all their stuff that exists in that land back then.
- c) OK John, good for the Israelites I suppose, what does any of this have to do with you and me? To answer, let's recall again what the Promised Land is to us: It's about trusting God with every aspect of our lives and living to make a difference for Him in all that we do. If we choose to live that way, God promises to bless our lives. So does that mean if we trust God that way, we each get a bunch of "free stuff" like houses to live in? Not that I've seen. The promise is that God will bless our lives as the bible gives us a set of principles to live by that teaches us the best way to live. The point is if we're willing to trust God, we can in this lifetime be prosperous by trusting in the principles God is teaching us in the bible.
 - i) But there are many financially successful atheists and people who are famous and don't trust in Jesus for their sins. What you have to remember is that this life is the only rewards they will get. There is a famous expression that success can be like a prison where we get so comfortable with what we've obtained in this life, we don't realize God can lock the door on that prison door for all of eternity.
 - ii) So is Moses saying if we trust God this way, we're guaranteed financial success or we'll be famous? Of course not. God wants us to use our lives for His glory. Of course God wants us to support our families and ourselves. He wants to guide us to use our lives to do that. My point is the bible talks a lot about money and how we should earn it and use it. What He's saying to us in these verses is to trust Him to overcome our fears so He can bless us as He knows what's best for our lives.
- d) Let me approach these verses one more way and then I'll move on: Do we learn the most when we succeed or fail? When do we pray the hardest, when life is going well or when it is going badly? It's always the latter. That's why God is reminding the Israelites and us to keep our focus upon Him when we're being blessed in life as we do when we're dealing with problems.

9. Verse 13: Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

- a) The point of this verse is not to take as many oaths as possible. The point is to trust God to a point that we're only trusting in Him and not any other god. Yes Jesus said, "let our yes be yes and our no be no". (Matthew 5:37). Jesus' point is the Jewish people living at His time had an elaborate set of rules of how one can and cannot take oaths. Jesus' point is essentially the same as this verse, that we trust in God and Him alone when we take oaths for whatever the purpose. Remember that God cares about His name and reputation. If we're taking an oath, we do it by what we value most and hopefully that is God's name.

10. Verse 14: Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.
- a) What we're reading here is a commentary on the first of the 10 Commandments: That we are to love God alone. The point for those Israelites is that they're about to enter a land full of people who worship other deities. This is God saying, "Don't do that as I love you and care about you so much that I want you to keep your focus upon Me."
 - b) Let me talk about the word "jealous". How can a perfect God be jealous of anything? The obvious idea is that He cares about us so much, He doesn't want to see us waste away our lives by turning away from Him. It's a way of describing how much God loves and wants the best for our lives that we can relate to.
 - c) The next point is the consequences of disobeying the first Commandment. The Israelites had to learn the hard way that God can and would kick them out of that land when they did turn from Him at different points in history. Most of us know how literally true these verses have come and how much the Jewish people suffered for turning from Him.
 - d) So does that mean the Holocaust was based on something the Israelites did wrong? No, I am convinced that was demonic as Satan has made lots of attempts throughout history to wipe out the Jewish nation so that when Jesus returns, He'll have no Jewish nation to rule from whenever that occurs in the future history of civilization.
 - e) For us Christians, what do these verses mean? Simply, "Don't mess with God". He cares about His relationship with us and wants to treasure it. If and when we turn from Him, we can suffer just like the Israelites have suffered throughout history. God can't un-love what He loves. We call that "jealousy". We can't sin too much to lose His love, but we can lose our witness for Him if we turn from Him and waste the life God has given us.
11. Verse 16: Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah.
- a) OK, what is Moses talking about here? He is recalling an event told in Exodus 17, where the Israelites were complaining about a lack of water and demanding that God take care of their needs for water. The issue is not praying for God's help. The issue is demanding that God "prove Himself" in order for us to worship Him.
 - b) I'm convinced that for new Christians, God does show signs in order for us to trust Him more and grow in our faith. Once we do grow, those signs are less frequent as God wants us to walk by faith in His existence and not by signs. Those Israelites who wanted water at this point already saw God do the miracles in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. To demand more miracles was a lack of trust in Him. To put this another way, it's ok to ask God for what we need in life, it's another to demand miracles of God in order to do so.
 - c) Let me approach this verse another way: Is God aware of what we need in life in order to be a good witness for Him? Of course. However, God isn't going to magically make our water and food appear for us. As I like to say, "God gave us a brain, so go use it". Yes of course there are exceptions for those who can't take care of themselves. For the rest of us, God expects us to use our brains to figure out a way to earn a living so we can provide for us what we need to survive. Proverbs 30:8-9 tells us to effectively ask God to not make us so rich we forget about Him or so poor we have to beg for a living. The point as it relates to this verse is God is not to be tested by demanding miracles from Him when He gave us a brain and expects us to use it. Yes, He wants to guide the way we go and often will put us through tough times in order for us to keep our focus upon Him. At the same time, He wants to bless our lives by guiding us the way we should go.
 - i) OK, then where do I go? Often the answer is through trial and error. It is often by hindsight that we realize God wants us to go this way or that way. He can't guide us unless we're moving in the first place. The point as it relates to this verse is the Israelites were "lazy" at that point and demanded a miracle when God just wants them and us to trust Him to guide our lives as we go along them.

12. Verse 17: Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers, ¹⁹ thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said.
- a) Here we get another dose of encouragement. Moses is saying in Verse 17 that if we keep God's commandments, we will be blessed.
 - b) OK you may say, I want to be blessed by God. So do I have to start wearing Hebrew text on my forehead and wrists and put scripture on my doorposts to be blessed by God? If it were that easy, many Christians would have that. Remember that the issue isn't salvation but being blessed by God. If we can live our lives in terms of wanting to always put God first, then others, then ourselves, we'd be known in our community as someone who cares about others and cares about God. That's a good reputation to have. Would you want to be around someone all day who only cares about themselves? That's why being of service to others blesses our lives, as that type of service is contagious. If we know someone cares for us and lives in terms of trying to be a good witness for God, personally I'd want to go hang around a person like that.
 - c) My point is joy is contagious. Making a difference for others causes them to like us as we care for them. Having the joy to know we're saved no matter what gets us to appreciate life more and care for others as that's how God wants us to live. To put this another way, trying to obey the 10 Commandments won't get us saved, but it blesses our lives as we'll be known as someone who cares for others and others would want to be around us as we think of them and not ourselves. Am I perfect at this? Of course not and neither is anyone else we meet. We'll deal with what remedies for sins later. If we desire God's will for our lives and desire to put others before ourselves all of that makes us a good witness for Him which is what these verses are effectively asking us to do.
 - d) Consider these verses and the war the Israelites are about to start by trying to conquer the Promised Land. You would think that if a large group is about to go to war, Moses would be talking about how to kill people or how to advance in ranks. We get none of that here in this book. Instead we get talk of obeying God, caring for others and doing the right thing. Isn't that a contradiction to killing those who lived in Israel? No, because living for God is about obedience, even if we don't get the big picture. God knew that the way the people who lived in Israel was the wrong way to live (for example they kill their babies to prove their loyalty to their gods) and God wanted to put that type of practice to an end. God is using the Israelites as an instrument of His justice. That doesn't mean God wants us to go take the law into our own hands. It means we trust Him and look to this book as a guide as to how to best live our lives and think in terms of doing the right thing all the time.
 - i) The main point of the "Shema" (loving God as much as we can, effectively) is that if we learn to think of living "God first", and have a basic understanding of what is His commandments for our lives, we'll be blessed not in terms of "lots of stuff" or even eternal life. We'll be blessed in that living God first, others second, us third is the way He desires we live so we can make a difference for Him in this world. Of course we depend upon His power to do so as I've been stating a lot in this lesson.
 - e) Finally how did the Israelites win this war, if all they were to care about was pleasing God and putting Him first. When we get to the actual battles in the book of Joshua, there is no "Passing out tracts telling their enemies to love God or be killed". The Israelites won that war and every war they've been in WHEN (big "when") they've collectively put God first in their lives and trusted Him for those victories. The point is that God gets involved in the world He created to guide events for His glory. When we seek Him, He works behind the scenes to guide history for His glory. Of course tragedies still happen and none of us can explain all horrible things. It just means when we look back at history, we can see His hand guiding it for His glory. The Israelites history is one good example of that truth.

13. Verse 20: In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" ²¹ tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders--great and terrible--upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ²³ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. ²⁴ The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵ And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."
- a) For those of you who've had the joy of being around children, they love to ask questions. If they see us doing something, they love to ask why. If they see us using our lives to go make a difference for God, sooner or later out of curiosity they'll ask why are we using our time to make a difference for God? The interesting thing is that when this happens, God Himself tells us how to answer that question here in these verses.
 - b) The "short" version of these verses is that the Israelites are to tell their children that at one time in their history, their people were slaves to others and God rescued them out of that lifestyle through a bunch of miracles. Here's the kicker: They weren't rescued just so they could go do what they want: They were rescued so they could use their lives as a witness to the world of God's existence and in effect become slaves to His desire for their lives.
 - c) The point for you and me is that God wants us to teach our children that we too lived in a way that we were "slaves" to our own desires to live just to please ourselves. It's when we use our lives to make a difference for others that others want to be around us. That's how God blesses our lives because we're no longer living in a "me first" lifestyle. So if that is the best way to live, why do we need Jesus? The point is we can never be perfect as our desires to put ourselves first constantly creep back in. We never have to worry if we're good enough for God, as Jesus paid that price for us. However, out of gratitude for what He did for us, the greatest way to live is to use our lives to make a difference for Him. I've been beating that point home the entire lesson and hopefully you get the idea by now that if we want to be blessed by God, we put Him and others before ourselves.
 - i) That's why we read in the New Testament of Jesus saying the two most important commandments is the "Shema" and loving others more than ourselves. It's not to earn our way into heaven, but being blessed by God for living our lives that way.
 - d) In effect the rest of the laws we'll read over the rest of Deuteronomy is commentary. That is the main point of the last two verses of this chapter. If we live by putting God first and putting the needs of others as priority over our own needs then we get the main point of all of God's laws. Of course the rest of the book is important or it would not be a part of the bible. Chapter 6 teaches us effectively that if we learn to live by putting God first, and others second, and ourselves third, we will (big "will") be blessed by God based on how others treat us, and God "interfering" in our lives for His glory.
 - i) Let me ask the obvious question now: If we live that way, how does our "stuff" get done? As I like to joke, the trash still has to go out and the laundry still has to get done. If we think of life just in terms of "that's somebody else's job" then we're not using our lives for His glory. My point is often doing what we have to do is a way of putting others before ourselves is using our time to make a difference for others.
 - ii) Often people don't appreciate what we do, but if God exists and we're living to use our lives for His glory, we can rest assured that if we live by thinking of God first, others second and ourselves third, we are making a difference for God in this life and we will be blessed by Him by living that way. If you get that, you get why I wrote this whole lesson out.
 - e) Finally a quick word on "righteousness". That's how the chapter ends. That word means we have a "right standing before God". Let me explain further:

- i) It doesn't mean we're saved if we're perfectly obedient to these laws. Nobody can do that. It means we're "right in God's eyes" when we're living in terms of putting God first, others second and ourselves third.
 - ii) To be righteousness is something we should desire, not to act "holier than thou" or to prove our worth to God. He is well aware of how we live and what we do both good and bad. To be righteousness is all about using our lives to glorify Him in all that we do. It means we desire to please Him not to earn points, but only because it should be our desire to please Him out of gratitude for what He's done for us. If we get that, we get the purpose of living the Christian life, (living out of gratitude for what God's done for us) and we will be blessed by God by living that way.
 - iii) With that said, time to close in prayer:
14. Heavenly Father, we know that without Your power, we can never live in a way that's pleasing to You. Help us to think in terms of God first, others second, and ourselves third as we use our lives for Your glory. We are all too painfully aware that we sin we get our minds of that picture and onto our own will as a priority over Your will. Lord, You are well aware of what we have to deal with at this moment in our lives. Guide us and give us Your wisdom so that we use the time You've given us for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.