

1. The really good news of this lesson is that it's much shorter than the last one and we're no longer dealing with the good news and bad news associated with being a good witness for God. Instead Moses wraps up the benefits of obeying God's laws and the consequences of ignoring them as he reminds the Israelites how God's been guiding them the whole time. Which reminds me, my title for this lesson is, "Missing the Obvious" as a good portion of this text is about Moses lecturing the Israelites and us (as we read this) how we can easily get our minds off the fact that God's guiding our lives and blessing us whether we realize it or not.
 - a) Let me explain this concept another way: Are you currently reading this lesson? I assume so, as you are still here. My point is you're not alive today by some random fluke that our lives exist. We live in a universe created by something greater than ourselves who we call God. He allows life to exist on earth and reproduce itself. Despite all of the tragedies that have existed throughout recorded history, God allowed us to live long enough that we're alive today so we can make a difference for Him in the world He created.
 - b) I state all of that as that's in effect what Moses reminds the Israelites through the first part of this lesson. From here we get an "encore" appearance of the curses. The good news is we don't get another list of all the bad things that will happen to the Israelites descendants when they've turned from God. Instead it's more of an upbeat reminder that despite all of their sins and mistakes, God loves who He loves too much to ever abandon them. God is saying that after He's punished the Israelites for turning from Him, once again there will come a time He'll bless them as He can't stop loving who's He's committed to love for all of eternity. The point for you and me is God may punish us for turning from His will for our lives, but He can't unlove what He loves in the first place.
 - c) To put this simply, we may suffer for our sins, but we can't lose God's love because He's not capable of unloving what He loves. We may even die a horrible death or suffer great losses due to mistakes or circumstances, but if we believe Jesus died for our sins, we can't lose His love no matter how hard we may try. Hopefully I've beaten that point to death by now as I believe that is the underlying point of most of Chapter 29.
 - d) That leads to Chapter 30. The short version is God's making a promise to the Israelites of a future day when their descendants will be blessed in the land of Israel. There's an old biblical saying that the Old Testament is full of literal promises to the nation of Israel that have applications for us as Christians as well. I take God's word seriously. Given the fact that Israel is an independent country again after about 2,500 years is my proof that God is keeping His literal word that He will bless future generations of Israelites despite all their sins they've committed of turning to idols and of course, their corporate rejection of Jesus as their long awaited Messiah. God's promise made to Abraham (Genesis 12:7) of giving the land of Israel to them is an unconditional promise despite their rejection of Jesus. As I love to state, if I can't trust God's promises to the Israelite nation, how can God fulfill His promises through Jesus to me and all Christians?
 - e) Therefore, as we read of God's promises to bless future Israelite generations in Chapter 30 keep in mind God's also blessing us Christians who trust in His promise of Jesus literally returning to rule the world one day from Jerusalem. My point is in order for Jesus to rule from that land, that land has to exist as a Jewish state in the first place. That's how we as Christians are also part of this blessing given thousands of years ago.
 - f) What if you say, "OK John, that's all well and good and I believe it's true. How does all of this affect what I'm dealing with at this moment?" The point is God wants us to see past our problems of the moment and not miss the obvious of how He's blessing us in spite of whatever problems or issues we're dealing with. With that said, onto the specific details.

2. Chapter 29, Verse 1: These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.
- a) For those who care, the Jewish version of Deuteronomy lists this verse as the last verse in Chapter 28, while Christian bibles list this as the first verse of Chapter 29. The point being is that Jewish scholars believe this verse is Moses closing statement of all the blessings and curses of the last few chapters. In other words, Moses is saying, "What you've just read in the last bunch of chapters is God's requirements for us as His witnesses so we can make a difference for Him in the world around us."
 - b) The reason Christian scholars see this verse as the first one for Chapter 29 is they see it as tying to the speech given over Chapters 29 and 30 (one speech) that says in effect God will bless us if we get the big picture that He's been guiding our lives the entire time whether we realized it (thought about it) or not. Christian scholars don't disagree with the fact that Jewish scholars tie this verse to the previous chapter as much as Christian scholars desire we see this verse leading into this next section about how God's been guiding all of us for His glory whether we realize it or not. In effect, this chapter teaches us what's the role of the Holy Spirit. His role isn't to give glory to Himself, but to God the Father. It makes us realize how He's been guiding us and as Christians, He's with us to this moment whether we're focused on God or not.
 - c) Bottom line, this verse is a transition from the previous section of curses and blessings to a new section describing how God won't abandon us despite whatever tragedies we have to deal with at any given moment in time. I'm reminded of an old expression that Christians are constantly joyful, constantly seeking God and constantly in trouble as we use our lives to make a difference for Him. (A rough quote of Ray Steadman, a pastor who past away a some years back.)
 - d) Meanwhile, there are other things to say about this verse besides the transition factor. It talks about the covenant in Moab and the covenant in Horeb. If you don't know, Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where the 10 Commandments were given to the Israelites. Moab is the land just east of Israel where the Israelites are "parked" at this moment. What all this means is all the regulations as given over the last section of Deuteronomy which is in effect a commentary on the 10 Commandments, as well as the blessings and the curses is what is given here in the land of Moab.
 - e) One more bit of bible trivia before I move on. Scholars have referred to this last section of the book as the "Palestinian Covenant". Personally I hate that title, but it has been referred that way by scholars for centuries. The point is for most of the last 2,000 years the land of Israel was called Palestine. The word Palestine was meant as an insult to Jewish people.
 - i) There was a Roman Emperor in the 2nd Century AD that hated the Jewish people so much he renamed the land of Israel after the Philistines, a traditional enemy of the Jewish people. My point is the word "Philistines" became "Palestine" based on the translation into English. As that word, Palestine was meant as an insult to the Jewish nation I hate to use it, but we're "stuck with it" as it's been around for many a century and the "Palestinian Covenant" is associated with this treaty.
3. Verse 2a: Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:
- a) Most bible scholars will argue (I believe correctly) that Deuteronomy is a series of talks given by Moses as opposed to one big speech covering the book. Here in the first part of Verse 2 we get Moses saying he gathered all the Israelites at this point in time. Recall that most likely, there were probably over two million people. Therefore, I suspect this must have been some sort of natural amphitheater setting so people could hear what it is Moses is saying to the large crowd. The point is Moses is done giving the "Palestinian Covenant" which is all the laws and regulations stated through most of this book so far, and also he's done with the curses and blessings. Now Moses is telling them (and us), to realize God's been guiding us all this time, so realize we've been blessed whether we realize it or not.

4. Verse 2b: Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. ³ With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. ⁴ But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. ⁵ During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. ⁶ You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.
- a) To make it simple, Moses is reciting the history of the Israelites from the time they lived in Egypt to where they are today, just outside of the land of Israel. The main point given is how the Israelites have "missed the obvious" of how God's been guiding them. With that said, let me quickly explain the details:
 - i) The text begins with, "your eyes have seen". Most of those hearing Moses speak were either children or young adults when they left Egypt. My point is a large percentage of the audience listening to Moses speak have some memories of living as a slave in Egypt prior to all the miracles and plagues poured out on Egypt.
 - ii) Now notice Verse 4 that says the Israelites lack, "a mind that understands or eyes that see". I believe it refers to a lack of understanding this from God's perspective or as Christians call it, having the Holy Spirit guide our lives. It's like saying all of us see miracle after miracle, but we miss the big picture that God's been guiding us all of time. We're so focused on our problems, we miss the obvious that God cares about our lives and wants to guide us for His glory.
 - iii) When I'm going through a rough time, and feeling sorry for myself, that's when I have to remind myself that God's grace (His blessing on our lives that we miss as we're too busy focused on our problems) is good "one day at a time". It would be like realizing, tomorrow will have it's own problems. Trust that God will give us the grace to get through today and let's let God deal with tomorrow, as it occurs.
 - iv) With that statement out of my system, let us get back to Moses' examples as given in these verses. He reminds the Israelites that after 40 years, their clothes did not wear out nor their sandals. If one knows anything about lots of walking or lots of time exposed to the elements, those things wear out. The point is these Israelites may have thought it's been 40 years since the plagues on Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, but we haven't seen any miracles lately. God through Moses is saying they have seen miracles daily, but they're missing the obvious that their clothes are not worn out even after all that time wandering in the wilderness.
 - v) Moses last point can literally be translated, they ate no bread or grapes during all of that time. The point is despite all that time wandering in the wilderness God in His way provided for them despite the lack of any resources of their own.
 - b) The point for us in conclusion of this text is we may think we have problems and we may think God's not guiding us at the moment, but He's still there guiding our lives as we miss the obvious of what He's doing in the background of our lives. Yes our clothes and shoes will wear out and we don't get food falling from the sky, but yes, despite whatever we're dealing with at the moment, God's guiding us. To put it another way, if we still have food to eat and a roof over our head, do you think that's "just luck" or are you aware that God's been providing for us all this time? Getting out of a pity-party for ourselves must start by realizing that God's guiding our lives no matter what we're dealing with at this time.
5. Verse 7: When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. ⁸ We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
- a) Moses is effectively saying, "If the fact that our clothes didn't wear out or we haven't had any of our own food for 40 years isn't enough to convince us that God's still guiding us, what about the fact we as a nation defeated two other nations. In fact we defeated them so bad, there was enough land for two and one half tribes to settle in that land.

- b) In the book of Numbers, the total number of Jewish men who were old enough to fight a war was over 600,000. If one doubles that for women and add for children, my estimate is that there were about 2,000,000 Israelites at that time. That big group was divided into 12 tribes. My point is if two and one half tribes had enough land to settle outside of Israel "proper". To do that math, the Israelites conquered enough land so far that 415,000 people could live in the area they've conquered so far. Yes that's a rough estimate, but this gives us an idea of how significant an area the Israelites have already conquered.
 - c) OK, good for the Israelites way back then I suppose. What does this have to do with me? I could give a whole lecture on why two and one half tribes decided to settle outside of the land of Israel proper, and what that means to us. However, that's not the point here. What is the key principal is that God's been guiding them and us whether we realize it or not. Despite whatever problems we may be dealing with at the moment, God's working in the background of our lives to provide for us. Just as God provided for those two and one half tribes who wanted to settle east of Israel, just as God is providing food for all of the Israelites during that 40 year period, so God's still providing for us whether we think about it or not.
6. Verse 9: Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. ¹⁰ All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God--your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹ together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. ¹² You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, ¹³ to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ¹⁴ I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you ¹⁵ who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today.
- a) The way I describe these verses are effectively, "OK, God's been taking care of us to date, what do we do now?" As I love to state, "I'm saved, now what?" The issue for Christians is not just believing Jesus died for our sins, the lifelong issue is then what are we doing in that belief? Again, we can sit around and feel sorry for ourselves due to whatever it is we are facing at the moment, or we can go use our lives to make a difference for God. That is what Moses is effectively preaching in these verses. With that said, time for the details.
 - b) Remember that we just finished two chapters of Deuteronomy that are nicknamed, "The bad news, the good news and the really bad news". It was a list of blessings and curses that are associated with using or failing to use our lives to make a difference for God. To state the obvious, Christians need to see those laws "through the New Testament" in terms of understanding what God requires of us based on the understanding Jesus paid the full price for all our sins. Again we're back to "I'm saved now what?" question. That issue is: none of us Christians can earn our salvation. Still He desires we live in obedience to His rules for our lives strictly in gratitude for what He's done for us by that forgiveness and as a witness for Him so we can make a difference for Him. That is what living the Christian life is all about in one thought.
 - c) Meanwhile, back to the text itself. Moses reminds those Israelites that the land of Israel was promised to them, was first made to their common ancestors about 500 years earlier. The point here is that promise is both unconditional and conditional at the same time. It's conditional upon the Israelites obedience to trusting God with their lives and they being a witness for Him. It's unconditional in that God said back in Genesis 12 effectively that the land is theirs, whether or not they accept Jesus or not, or no matter how much sin they've done collectively. In other words, this isn't a salvation issue. It's an issue of being a good witness for God. If they (or us) fail to use our lives for His glory as He works through us, He'll still accomplish what He desires (draw people close to Him) but through others.

d) After all that Moses is making the point that the promises made to their common ancestor Abraham, his son Isaac and his son Jacob, who is the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. That promise of the land of Israel wasn't so much for those three men as it is for the multitude of people hearing Moses speak as well as their descendants. Moses is effectively saying, "Here you are just outside of Israel. I'm almost done giving my speeches and I'm about to die soon. It's up to you now. There's the land that God promised you. Are you going to take it or not? Are you going to live as God desires you live and be a witness for Him or are you going to ignore Him and suffer the consequences?"

i) The next logical question is what does this have to do with you and me? Again it comes down to how are we using the most valuable thing God gives us, our time? Are we using it just to enrich our own lives or worry about our own problems or are we using it to make a difference for Him in this world? God's saying to us that He's given us this precious gift called time. How are we using our time? If we're using some of it for His glory (after realizing God Himself has paid the complete price for our sins) then we can rely upon His power to make a difference for Him.

ii) OK, now that I've beaten that point to death, time to move on.

7. Verse 16: You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here.¹⁷ You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold.¹⁸ Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

a) Moses was painfully aware how tempting it is to turn away from God so we can focus on our own issues. At that time, Egypt was full of "gods" that each had a separate purpose. When the Israelites enter the Promised Land, the local residents also had "gods" that each represent a different function. To put this in modern terms, we may be dealing with issue "x" or "y" in our lives and the logical thing to do outside of God is to apply this solution to that issue of the moment. First get the idea that God wants to be the only God we seek in order to deal with our issues. It's realizing God's saying to us, abide by the rules as taught in the bible, seek Me for guidance and then make the best decision possible based on what is taught in the bible. Most of the big decisions we make in life are not biblical ones. The point is if we live under the guidelines God is teaching us, then we make the best decision we can given those guidelines.

b) That may be all well and good. What does it have to do with these verses? All around us are things that can drive us away from seeking the true and living God. The ancient world had statues that represent little "gods". Our world has money, fame and power that draw us away from seeking God's guidance. As I need to state every now and then, money, or fame or power are not bad things all to themselves. The issue is about whether or not we are trusting in those things for our happiness as opposed to our trust in God to guide us.

c) That leads me back to these verses. Notice Moses is saying it is both an individual as well as a corporate responsibility to worship God and God alone. This has nothing to do with non-believers. This is about those of us who claim we're trusting God to guide our lives. In other words, God expects obedience among those of us who trust Jesus died for all our sins, so we can use our lives for His glory. This applies to individual believers as well as all of us as a group. So does that mean we go around in church and be the "sin police?"

i) No, but at the same time, when we are aware of what may be a sin issue, or what could potentially be a sin issue, we're to confront it directly (not spread rumors) so that the issue is dealt with. As I stated in the last lesson, Jesus lays out a method of how we're to confront sin within the church in Matthew 18. The short version is we first confront the person "one on one". Then if that doesn't solve the issue, we go back with witnesses. If that doesn't solve the issue, we report it to the church as a group of witnesses. The key point is sin isn't to be tolerated among believers.

- ii) I'm not saying Christians have to be perfect. I'm just saying that when we become aware of a sin in our lives, we confess it by realizing God's right in that situation and how we behave was wrong. We then agree to turn from that sin. Yes we can and will still mess up again, but realizing that God's grace (undeserved blessing) is upon our lives, means that He'll give us the strength to get through the day as He will lead us by His power to overcome whatever it is we're facing at the moment.
 - iii) Bottom line, make every effort to avoid sin. That's what Moses is focusing upon us as both individuals and corporately as a church.
- 8. Verse 19: When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry.²⁰ The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.²¹ The LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.
 - a) Let me give my very loose translation of Verse 19: If someone says I'll dedicate my life to serving God, and then go on my merry way, and not think about Him very much, then he or she will suffer for that lack of a commitment.
 - b) Think of our lives this way: If God's called us to make a difference for Him and we ignore that commitment, do you think God will "divorce" our relationship with Him? God will do what He has to do, to drive us back to Him. That includes the idea of making us suffer as implied at the end of Verse 19. Let's suppose someone commits their life to serve Jesus and then walks away from that commitment the rest of their lives. Such a person will be condemned to hell not because they lived a bad life but because they didn't put their time and their money where their mouth is in a commitment to Jesus. My point is can't know whether or not someone is saved based on some commitment they made one time in their lives. What we can do is tell by how someone is living their lives whether or not they've made such a commitment or not.
 - c) What does all of that have to do with these verses? These verses say that God will "single him out for disaster" as it states in Verse 21. As we all know there are many people in the world who are "successful" (be it riches, fame or power) but never make a commitment to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. The point is sometimes God's punishment will come in this lifetime and more often than not, it will come on judgment day. It is also going to be obvious to people around such a person, as he or she will not glorify God by the way they live.
 - d) Therefore, our job is not to fix people or say, we're better people than you are. All that is going to do is make them angry at us. People aren't really interested in change until they first realize they're helpless to change by themselves. I'm convinced God is very capable of leading people all by Himself without us trying to fix them. I know this is reading like an "AA" meeting, but that isn't my point. My point is we read in these verses of a man (or a woman) whose life is being cursed. I'm not saying that all the bad things we experience in life are due to some sort of sin issue. I'm saying that we need to check ourselves versus how God wants us to live as a starting point to face our problems. If there is some sort of obvious sin issue, confess it as "God's right and I'm wrong" and trust in the fact that God's forgiven us and then go forward to make the best decisions we can under the guidelines of the rules and regulations as taught in the bible.
 - e) As I love to state, the theme of Deuteronomy is "behavior matters". I'm saying this as a "once saved, always saved" Christian. We don't watch our behavior to earn God's love. We watch our behavior because God's way of living is the best way we can be a witness for all the blessings He's provided for us as I've been stating throughout this lesson. With that said, time to move on.

9. Verse 22: Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. ²³ The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur--nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. ²⁴ All the nations will ask: "Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?"
- a) If you're somewhat familiar with the history of the Israelites from the time they first came into the land until the time of the Babylonian captivity (around 600 BC) or when the land was destroyed by the Romans (say from 70AD to about 150 AD), much of Deuteronomy does read like history written in advance. It's almost like Moses knew the next 1,000 years of their history and predicted it in this book. I state all of that, because future generations of Israelites can literally ask the question that God asks through Moses in Verse 24.
 - b) The underlying point of course, is there is a price to be paid for turning from God. Again the issue isn't salvation as much as it is being a witness for God. That's why I gave a little speech a half page back about "behavior matters" to the saved Christian. The reason that I call this lesson "missing the obvious" is that we can be so busy focusing on our immediate issues, that we forget that God's been guiding us all our lives. If we fail to use our lives as a witness for God once we realize He's been guiding us all the time, in effect we've wasted the life God's given us. The calamities as described in these verses are the results of living a life not used by God.
 - i) But John, you also wrote about a half page back about successful people who have never been believers. The issue is not unbelievers, but believers. Notice the threat here is to believers. This is God saying, "You should have known better and now we'll suffer if we waste the opportunities God's given us as believers."
 - c) If I'm not scaring you enough with this advice, notice God compares what will happen to Israel literally to Sodom and Gomorrah. (The other two towns mentioned were also part of that literal destruction.) The idea is that if our lives become a "waste of a witness" for God, we will be remembered as a waste of a witness as these cities became a wasteland.
 - d) OK, enough of my answer to the question of Verse 24. Let's read God's answer:
10. Verse 25: And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. ²⁶ They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. ²⁷ Therefore the LORD's anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. ²⁸ In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now."
- a) The good news is my answer pretty much agreed with what God said through Moses, here in these verses, so I suspect I'm on the right track.
 - b) Let me talk about literal (historical) Israel aspect of these verses first and then I'll get back to the important question of how they apply to our lives. God's saying through Moses in these verses that if and when Israel gets to a point where their land is literally abandoned by the Israelites then they've got no one to blame but themselves. As most of us know by now, they were twice historically removed from that land. (Babylonian invasion and then the Romans did it again in the early part of the 2nd Century). For a while that land had to be pretty much abandoned by the vast majority of the Jewish people.
 - c) Of course I need to add that God can't "Unlove what He loves" which is why the nation of Israel is back in the land today. My point is while there have been points in history where the Israelites have been few in number, and they have been kicked out of that land, it was never to be a complete end of that nation. However, when they (or us) fail to be a witness for Him, they and us will suffer for that act.
 - d) That leads back to us. While Christians aren't united in a single land, if God's willing to punish them, we should fear His wrath just as much if we fail to be a witness for Him.

11. Verse 29: The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.
- a) Time for another of my loose translations: It's impossible for us as people to understand all that God knows. There is an old biblical expression that goes, "Any God that one can fully comprehend is not one worth worshipping". Personally, I've always preferred a line I heard many years ago, "Every time I think about how big God is, all I do is give myself a headache." (David Hocking). The reason I'm stating that obvious point here is because in this verse God's saying we can't fully comprehend Him, but we can comprehend all that He's written for us to obey.
 - b) Many years ago, I once heard a pastor say, "When I read God's laws in the Old Testament, I think, "This is good, glad it's here." The problem is our human nature doesn't want to be obedient to Him so we rebel and sin." (A loose quote by Chuck Smith). My point is what we as Christians read in God's laws are for us to obey, not to earn His love but just so we can live the type of life God desires we live. It doesn't mean we'll be perfect. It just means we do our best to live as He desires we live by (key part) the Holy Spirit's guidance. That is how we make a difference for Him in the world around us.
12. Chapter 30, Verse 1: When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, ² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. ⁴ Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. ⁵ He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶ The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. ⁷ The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. ⁸ You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. ⁹ Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, ¹⁰ if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
- a) Let me step back for a moment to remind us of the big picture. Deuteronomy is a series of speeches given by Moses to a very large group of people a short time before they're about to enter the land of Israel. This book is Moses' farewell speech as we'll get to his death in a few chapters. I remind you of this fact as let's be honest, the last few chapters have been fairly depressing as it mostly describes the bad news associated with disobedience to God in our lives. I'm reminding you of that fact, because these ten verses give us good news of what happens when we return to God even if we've sunk so low as suffered some or all of the curses as described in the last few chapters.
 - b) These last few chapters have also been very personal to me, in that my business has been really slow the past few months. My family and I have been living off of savings. Things are starting to get better now. The toughest part wasn't the financial loss as much as it is trying to figure out if God still wanted me to keep the business or go do something else. The mental strain was the hardest part and I admit I battled depression on and off for the past few months. I'm grateful for something one of my mentor's said many years ago as he was going through bankruptcy. He said in effect, "I started to see saw every oncoming car as an opportunity to end all of this." What kept him going and helped me through all of that dark time was the line "I couldn't do that to my God" and neither could I. Now let me share why I'm telling you this story, as it's relevant to this passage.

- i) To explain, recall again from the last lesson we had "the bad news, the good news and the really bad news". It was God outlining the benefits of using one's life as a witness for Him and the danger of turning away from Him. One line near the end of the last chapter (Verse 67) hit me hard. It was "In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!" – because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see." That line is essentially saying life will be so tough, you'll constantly wish for each day or each night to come to an end."
- c) With that said, I didn't write all of that to depress you. I wrote it to show what the end of Chapter 28, and all those depressing curses say in comparison to the first 10 verses of this chapter. Verse 3 of this chapter says effectively says after all the bad things have occurred to you associated with those curses, then God will restore your fortunes and bless you.
 - i) To state what may be obvious, God is literally talking about the nation of Israel. In spite of all they have suffered over the last several millennia and the millions of Jewish people who've died due to those tragedies, God is also writing history well in advance here as Moses is stating how Israel will once again be an independent nation in the future. If you're going through doubts the bible is the word of God, just consider how the bible has accurately predicted Israel's history. Even if you'll argue that Deuteronomy is "late dated", it was definitely quoted by Jesus Himself and that was before the Roman destruction. My point is simply that Deuteronomy predicts in this chapter how Israel will be "restored" despite all they've suffered.
 - ii) That leads me back to my own suffering. I'm confident based on my belief Jesus died for my sins that I'll recover from what I'm dealing with at the moment. God won't let you and I suffer forever, because He can't un-love what He loves. That's the idea behind all of these verses. Remembering that brings me joy.
- d) Let me step back and discuss all of these verses from another angle. Yes they are literally talking about how God will restore the fate of the nation of Israel after God's driven all of them to the "four corners" of the world and will bring them back again to be a nation. We are literally seeing that come true in our lifetimes. Every day over the last 50 years or so, Jewish people have been moving back to the land of Israel often to get away from where they are currently suffering in other parts of the world. My point is despite the problems the modern state of Israel has, it has become a homeland for those people as predicted in the book of Deuteronomy here and elsewhere in the bible.
 - i) I'm also equally convinced the principal behind these verses applies to Christians as well. To pound the point home again, God can't unlove what He loves. That's why I'm confident that despite what I'm going through financially God still does love and care for me (and you) as an individual and wants to guide my life as He desires it to be. It's the realization that God's in charge of my life and He desires the best for me, despite whatever I'm dealing with at the moment. He's providing the grace (unearned blessing) for me and you to get through the day as tomorrow has enough problems of it's own (A paraphrase of Matthew 6:34.)
- e) In effect, the rest of these verses are the details. It describes pretty graphically how they have suffered and will have their "fortunes restored" based on when one has returned to trust God to guide one's life again. Aren't these verses also predicting life in Israel after the Messiah (i.e., 2nd Coming of Jesus) happens? Of course. They're describing a future day when Jesus comes to rule from Israel and end the Middle East fighting. That's what the Israelites wanted Jesus to do at His 1st Coming. I'm still convinced that if Jesus did overthrow Rome, He would have been accepted as the Messiah. However, the purpose of His First Coming was to pay the price for sins. It's the 2nd Coming that is to rule over the world from Israel. I state all of that here as one can also read all of these blessings to the nation of Israel as literally occurring at the time when the Messiah reigns.

- f) With that whole speech out of my system, I want to focus on Verse 10 again for a moment: Let me repeat part of it here: "If you obey...God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law" you will receive these blessings. My point is all of the verses that predict great blessing to the nation of Israel aren't just about some unknown to us future date of the Messiah ruling the world from Israel. They apply to anyone living at this time willing to trust God with their lives here and now. The point is whatever we're dealing with at this moment is temporary, and I keep that fact in mind when I deal with any and all tough times that I have to battle either financially or any other way in my life.
- g) Speaking of the when can we and will be blessed by God question, I present Verse 11:
13. Verse 11: Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?"¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?"¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.
- a) Time for another of my loose translations: In order to get God to bless our lives, we don't have to travel anywhere to get it and ask someone to ascend to heaven to get it for us. We don't have to travel to say a distant country to be blessed by God. It's just a matter of us believing God's word is true and obeying it as such. As I've been preaching all through this lesson, yes it's literally about the Israelites and their land. Even with that said, it also applies to Christians in the sense if we believe Jesus died for all our sins, the big question of course is what are we doing about it? How are we using our life to make a difference for Him based on that salvation? That's why our behavior matters even as a follower of Jesus who'll I'll argue is once saved, always saved as long as one believes Jesus died for every sin we've ever committed or ever will commit.
- b) That in effect is what Moses is preaching here in these verses. It's not an issue of whether or not we're saved. The issue is what are we doing with that salvation? That's why Moses is preaching to this large crowd that God's word is all around us waiting to be obeyed.
14. Verse 15: See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.
- a) Remember that Moses is telling all of this to the Israelites long before any of those bad or good things have happened to them historically over the last few millennia. The point is Moses is wrapping up his speech by saying in effect, "It's now up to you (and us too) to choose to obey His commandments or suffer the consequences of ignoring Him, now that we know what to do. I've always argued that the bad news of knowing our bible well is God holds us accountable for what we know, or even what we should know if we live in a country where bible knowledge is readily available to us. Yes it's much better to learn our bible and understand what God requires of us, but the price we pay for such knowledge is we're accountable for what it says.
- b) Let me also state for example, that God doesn't requires Christians to dress and act like an Orthodox Jewish person dresses today. The issue is, if we believe Jesus died for every sin we'll ever commit, what are we doing about it? Like I love to state, most of the really hard decisions we have to make in life aren't exactly like the issues stated in the bible. What He wants us to do is live under the framework laid out for us in the bible. Then we make the best decisions possible under that framework. If you think all these laws are too many to remember, then simply live under the idea that it should be our desire to please God and live in the way the bible desires we live. In other words, love God and love our neighbor as ourselves is the principal behind all these laws. Also remember that God also gives us the power to live as He desires which is what the Holy Spirit is all about. All I'm saying is we can be blessed like these verses says we can if we trust God to guide our lives.

15. Verse 17: But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.
- a) At this point we're a few verses away from Moses wrapping up this whole sermon on the importance of living as God desires we live. Beginning in the next chapter, the topic will move to who will be the next leader of Israel and why that is so. With that said, Moses is giving one final warning of the danger of turning against God. If you consider all of the negative emphasis in the last few chapters of the danger of turning from God's desire for how the Israelites should live, it's as if Moses understood how badly the Israelites would mess up in the future. Out of God's love for the Israelites, Moses is urging all of them as hard as he could, to realize how much God loves them and cares for them.
 - b) This leads me back to the lesson title of "missing the obvious". The obvious is the fact that God loves us individually as well as a group of believers wanting to make a difference for Him in the world around us. That's why Moses started this two-chapter section with some reminders of how God's guided and provided for the Israelites during the time they were "wandering in the wilderness". It's also the realization for me that God has been there for me as I wandered through my own wilderness time. Hopefully when you go through your own wilderness time, you will realize how God's been there guiding us the whole time and He'll continue to guide us if we're willing to let Him be in charge of our lives.
 - c) That speech leads us back to the "conditions" of living in the Promised Land as stated in these verses. The main point is the Israelites were required to obey God as He desires as a condition for living in the land of Israel. As I've been a lot stating since I started teaching this book, the "Promised Land" for Christians is about trusting God with every aspect of our lives. If we turn from Him, God will allow us to suffer, not because He enjoys it, but as a motivation to draw us back to Him. God loves us too much to ever abandon us, but He insists we live for Him on His terms, which essentially is His laws as taught here. All that means is if we're grateful for the salvation God's given us, we live as He desires as a witness for Him. That too, is "Deuteronomy" in one thought.
16. Verse 19: This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- a) Let me end this lesson with one last "very loose translation". I, (God) give each of you and all of you (those of us who've dedicated our lives to serving Him) the option of choosing to live for Him or against Him. That's why God through Moses spent chapters explaining how God desires we live. We then get a set of blessings and curses based on obedience or a lack of obedience to how God wants us to live. So please, choose to use your life as to make a difference for God and don't waste the lives you have.
 - b) I'll end this lesson with a final reminder that we're always to read the laws listed in the Old Testament through the New Testament. It's the point that we don't try to please God in order to earn our salvation or get eternally rewarded for good behavior. God lays out these laws for us strictly to point out that the best use of our time is to use it for His glory and to make a difference for Him in the world around us.
17. OK, I promised to make this lesson much shorter than the last one, so I'll end it here. Let's close in a word of prayer: Father, we realize we're imperfect people. We get so focused on our issues of the moment, we forget that You are there, guiding our lives through whatever we're dealing with at this time. Help us to rely upon Your power to live the type of life You desire we live as to make a difference for You in the world around us. May we "choose life" based on the principals as taught in this book, so we can use our lives for the greatest purpose one can have in this life, to use it for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.