

1. Let me open with my favorite question to ponder, "I'm saved, now what?" Let me assume for the moment that you believe Jesus died for all your sins, past, present and future, and there's nothing we can do to earn our salvation. OK, then what? How do we now live based on the assumption we can't earn our salvation? Yes I'm convinced that the death, resurrection and life of Jesus is the central theme of the bible. However, even after we're convinced that is true, there is still the big question of, what do we do about it? That's the secret of understanding God's laws: To see them from the perspective of not needing them in order to get into heaven, but to see them as a guide of how is the best way to live our life based on that salvation. In summary, if one believes Jesus paid the complete price for one's sins, one should want to live out of gratitude for that salvation and that is what this book teaches us.
 - a) To teach this principal another way, yes we're free to do what we want if we believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins, but why would we want to ignore God if we're grateful for what He's done for us? That's why God's laws are here, to know what it is God wants us to do now that we're saved.
 - b) If you're curious about what it is God expects of us as saved individuals, you've come to the right place. The Book of Deuteronomy literally means "second law". The title comes from the Latin and Greek word that means, well just that. Deuteronomy is essentially one big speech (or a series of speeches) given by Moses shortly before he died. The book does repeat some of the laws already stated in the first few bible books, but Deuteronomy does expand them and explain them. In other words it's not just a repeat of God's laws, it is a more detailed explanation of how those laws should apply to our lives.
2. Before I go any further, I need to explain what is and is not the "Promised Land". The Israelites at this point in their journey are about to enter what we call the land of Israel and what's considered the Promised Land. Considering the fact that the vast majority of people reading this do not live in Israel, what does the Promised Land mean to us? First off, it does not represent heaven. When the Israelites actually enter that land, they have to fight wars. I'm pretty positive fighting wars is not part of heaven, so that's not what that land should mean to us. Ok, if it's not literal Israel and it's not heaven, what is the Promised Land for us Christians? It's about living the type of life that God desires we live as a witness for Him to the world around us.
 - a) For the original audience reading for whom this book was written, they were about to go conquer the literal land of Israel and God was preparing them for that fight. However the book spends almost no space discussing war strategy or how to actual conquer Israel. Instead, it's a book about how to live the type of life God wants us to live. It's as if God is saying to them and us, I'll lead you to victory over the battles you must face in life if you are willing to trust Me to lead you to that victory. No matter how difficult the situation is that we have to face, I (God) will lead us to victory based on your trust in Me to guide us through life. That is Deuteronomy in a "nutshell" and that's what the Promised Land is.
 - b) Yes the book is full of laws and regulations, but those rules are there to teach us what it is God expects of us as we live our lives to make a difference for them. In order to apply the laws to our time and situation first one has to learn how they applied to the Israelites who lived over 3,000 years ago and then we'll discuss how they apply to us today.
 - c) With all that said, the reason I encourage you to study Deuteronomy with me, isn't so that we can learn ancient history, but to realize how God wants us to live out our lives based on the belief that we can't earn our salvation based on how we live. Remember the idea of we can't change our past; only learn from it to improve our future. With all that said, let me return to the question of "I'm saved, now what?" The basic answer is to use our time and our resources to make a difference for God out of gratitude of what He's done for us.

3. For those of you who've been with me through studies of other bible books, you know that I love to start with the "who, what, when and why's" of a book. The good news is the author Moses in effect does that Himself in the first few verses of the book. Therefore, I'm going to save that part of my standard introduction until after I start the verse-by-verse commentary in a bit. If you've ever read or studied the four books of the bible that come before Deuteronomy, those four books along with this one are all written by Moses and designed to be in the order that they're in. My point is you don't have to know all those books well to study this one, but it is helpful to explain some of the principals taught in this book and I'll explain those as we go.
4. Let me answer the question, why did I pick Deuteronomy to teach now? I admit that one reason is it's on my "bucket list" of things I wanted to do before I die. One thing on my list was to write a verse-by-verse commentary of all four gospels which I've now finished. Another bucket list item for me is to complete a commentary through all five of Moses' bible books and assuming nothing happens to me before I complete that task, I'd like to finish that goal as well.
5. Speaking of questions let me discuss for the moment the author Moses. One can find a number of places in both the Old and New Testament that states that Moses is the author of these books. There are also lots of boring commentaries one can read that argue that Moses didn't write these books himself at the time the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land. My answer to those critics is very simple: I believe Jesus is God. Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy more than any other bible book and He claims Moses is the author. Therefore if you don't believe Jesus is God, one has much bigger problems than who wrote Deuteronomy and when. Therefore if you believe Jesus is God, then you have to believe Moses is the author of this book, end of issue. If you don't believe Jesus is God, then you need to go study the four gospels again, as the purpose of this study here in Deuteronomy is to assume that point is correct and not go over it again.
6. So why did Moses write this book? Think of it as a graduation speech. The Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land for the first time. Moses himself was not allowed himself to go into that land, as I'll discuss throughout this book. The short version is that Moses is associated with God's laws, and those laws are not designed to lead us into salvation, but to show us how we're guilty of sin and how to live once we are saved. Yes Moses was being punished for something he did as taught in Numbers Chapter 20, however, the underlying principal of the book is to show us that the law (the whole book of Deuteronomy) does not show us how to be saved, but how to act once we are saved. If one gets that, then one gets Deuteronomy.
 - a) With that said, let's start the verse-by-verse commentary as we learn what it is that God expects of us. Oh, and if you haven't figured it out by now, my lesson title is the question of "I'm saved, now what" that I used to open this lesson. Ok, let's get started:
7. Deuteronomy Chapter 1, Verse 1: These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness east of the Jordan – that is, in the Arabah – opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. ² (It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.) ³ In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them. ⁴ This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth.
 - a) Remember how I said the first few verses, give us the who, what, when and why's of this book? My point is don't panic about having to learn all of these places listed in the first few verses. They are here to give us a "location stamp" of where the Israelites have been, where they are going and where they are at the moment. Since none of us will actually be at this location, I'm going to explain it just so that you know where they were at that time and hopefully why we should care. The short version is the Israelites had spent the last forty years (technically 38, but I'll get to that) wandering in the desert for their failure to trust God with what He wanted the Israelites to do. If you learn nothing else here, get the idea that there is a big price of disobedience to God's desires for us. It may not affect our salvation, but when we disobey God's desires it hurts us in this life as well as the next one.

- b) With that said, let me give a little background here for those unfamiliar with the story of the exodus from Egypt. God originally told one man named Abraham that he'd have an uncountable number of descendants even though he didn't have any children. This man was told that his descendants would live in Egypt for 400 years and then eventually come out to live in the Promised Land. His grandchildren and great grandchildren entered that land. After 400 years God led multitudes of Israelites (about 2 million is my estimate) out of that country. This group then were lead to a place called Mount Sinai where Moses did receive the 10 Commandments. From that spot to the land of Israel would have been an eleven day journey if the Israelites had obeyed God.
 - i) When the Israelites got to that land, they sent spies to check it out. The spies said that it was a good land in that it was good for crops and raising animals, but they also said, it had giants living there and big walled cities. Then their fears of being killed got the best of them and they rebelled. God then said that the generation that saw His miracles in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea could not enter that land based on those fears. The punishment for their failure to follow God's lead to go conquer that land cost that generation about 40 years of time.
 - ii) The point is, it is now the next generation who didn't see the miracles in Egypt and didn't see the parting of the Red Sea are chosen to enter the Promised Land. That second generation is now just east of the land of Israel near the city of Jericho. My point is that all of the geographical boundaries that we're reading in these first few verses are describing the location that these two million are located at the moment as Moses is describing the situation as he begins this book long speech.
- c) Now for the important question: Why should we care about any of this stuff? Why does God want us to know that the previous generation had to be wiped out before this next one could actually enter Israel? Good question: Think of it as requiring a lifetime to learn to trust God in order to live the type of life that God desires we live. By having the first generation die off and the second one actually enter the land, it's symbolic of God shows us over our lifetimes how it is that God wants us to live. Like I said earlier, none of us can change our past, just learn from it, as to not repeat our mistakes. That is in effect what He is teaching us, to "throw off" our old way of thinking (living solely to please ourselves) so we can live the type of life God desires we live to make a difference for Him in this world.
- d) Believe it or not, all of this leads to Verse 3. We've now described the where, (outside of Israel), the who (Moses as the leader of about 2,000,000 people, as Numbers said there are about 600,000 men, so if one adds for women and children, we get to this number). The why, to teach us how to live the type of life God wants us to live. I didn't give us a when. Best estimates is about 1,400 BC, for those who care. At Verse 3, Moses is still reciting the history of the Israelites wandering in the desert for about 40 years. Remember that this is Moses' "graduation speech" so he's starting by covering the highlights and the lowlights of that long time frame. The highlights are that they conquered two nations so far outside of Israel. So why is that there? To encourage the Israelites. It's to say in effect, "God has lead you to victory over these two ancient nations, what makes you think God won't also lead you to victory over the nations that actually live inside the land of Israel?"
 - i) So if that is the highlights, what's the lowlights? The fact that 38 years earlier the Israelites refused to trust God. The spies sent into the Promised Land were gone for 40 days. God said in effect, "OK, you don't trust me after 40 days? Great I'll make you pay for 40 years". However, you've already been in the wilderness for about two years, so I'll count that as part of your time you owe me.
 - ii) There is an old joke of what did Moses do for those 40 years? The answer is a lot of funerals. If that generation had to die off in roughly 40 years and we had about 600,000 men and women part of that original generation, do the math as that's a lot of funerals to do every day. Bottom line is that whole generation had to die off.

8. Verse 5: East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying:
⁶The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, "You have stayed long enough at this mountain. ⁷ Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. ⁸ See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them."
- a) Time for one of my loose translations: You've (historical to this event) have hung out long enough at Mount Sinai (Called Mt. Horeb in this translation). God wants to give you the Promised Land, which includes parts of Lebanon and Iran, now go conquer it." What we read Moses describing is the time roughly 38 years ago when the Israelites received the 10 Commandments. Then God said, "OK, that's all I have to say to you people right now, so move out and go start conquering the land that I want you to conquer."
 - b) The reason Moses is stating the past is 38 years earlier God spoke to the last generation of the group Moses is speaking to now. To expand, at that time God said in effect, "OK now it is time to go conquer that land". As we'll read coming up in Verse 15, Moses is going to recall how the Israelite spies said how tough it would be to conquer that land, so then the Israelites were too scared to conquer it.
 - c) The point here is "God's command's are God's commands". If the previous generation was too scared to do what God commands us to do, He'll patiently wait for someone else who is willing to obey Him to take on the same command. OK John, most of us know that this generation did conquer most of that land in the next book of the bible, Joshua. Why state all of this here? For starters, so that this next generation would be reminded how the last generation failed and "it's now up to them not to suffer the same fate for disobedience".
 - d) The point for us is what God commands for us to do, He also gives us the power to follow Him to do what He has commanded. While you and I may not have to literally go to war to conquer a land, we each have our own fights to conquer. No one promises that life will be easy. What God is saying is that He'll provide for us the strength to do the right thing in any situation. We can't always control what situation we get into, but we can trust in Him to lead us through our lives and ultimately use them for His glory if we're willing to trust Him through whatever we're dealing with.
 - i) Bottom line, just as God is trying to encourage these Israelites to "go forward as He is leading them" so God is always trying to encourage us to go forward to do the right thing as He's also leading us to make a difference for Him in our lives".
 - ii) OK, what if I don't know what to do next? As I like to say, welcome to the club. I would simply say, pray, study God's word and make the best decisions possible based on the information that we have trusting He is guiding us for His glory.
 - iii) To state all of this another way, we only get one shot at life. We can use it for our own benefit, or we can use it to benefit God in all we do. That's what He's trying to encourage them and us to do in these verses.
 - e) That leads me back to the text. Notice Moses is saying that God promised to give the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, his son Isaac and his son Jacob. The point is God can be trusted with His promises. Just as God has fulfilled His promise to give them lots of descendants, so we can trust His promise that He will lead us to conquer that land.
 - i) It may help once again to remember what the Promised Land is for us. It's not the physical land of Israel. It's about living a life based on trusting God in everything that we do. It's about learning to appreciate life based on the idea of living for a greater purpose other than just our own needs. It's about using our lives to make a difference for Him in all that we do. In other words, to go conquer the Promised Land is about conquering our fears to not trust God in every aspect of our lives so that we can make a difference for Him with our lives.

- f) OK, we know from history that the Israelites did conquer much of the land described in the past few verses, but not all of it. Does that mean they all went to hell because they did fail to do all that God required them to do? No, just as we're not sent to hell when we fail to do all that God desires we do. Salvation is about trusting God. Obedience in this life is about using our lives to make a difference for Him. I've always believed there are eternal rewards for our obedience, but I also suspect that for most people there are also rewards in this lifetime based on our trust in God to do what He desires we do, which is to study His word and live based on what it says. Speaking of what it says, time to read on:
9. Verse 9: At that time I said to you, "You are too heavy a burden for me to carry alone."¹⁰ The Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky.¹¹ May the Lord, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised!¹² But how can I bear your problems and your burdens and your disputes all by myself?¹³ Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you."
- a) Back in the book of Numbers, the previous book in the bible, Moses is describing how he set up leadership among the mass number of Israelites there in the wilderness. We'll get to the specifics of that division when we get to Verse 15. The point here is that as God is about to lead the large number of Israelites into the Promised Land. There's already set up a system of leadership to deal with issues as they arise. It is Moses way of saying what do you do if you have a problem tomorrow? Take them up with your local leaders.
- b) OK, the Israelites listening to Moses speech knew all of this. Why state it here? It's not so Moses can brag about that accomplishment. It's to remind the Israelites that just as God promised to make the descendants of Abraham into a huge number of people, "See it is so based on the evidence right in front of you". Think about this situation this way: If these Israelites knew they were about to go to war, they would be worried that their numbers would decrease due to losses in war. Yet Moses is reassuring them that just as God did increase their numbers greatly to date, so God can and would increase their numbers even more if they're willing to trust Him with what He wants to lead them to do.
- i) Notice in Verse 11 it says may God increase you a 1,000 times. That number isn't to be taken literally. It's just an expression that God wants to bless you as a nation far greater than one can imagine. I remember one time when I lead a bible study I filled up a water glass to the point where it was spilling on the floor. My point is I wanted to show that God wants to bless us far more than we can imagine based on the size of our glass (our expectations). That's what God through Moses wanted to do with this group of Israelites and that's what He wants to do with us as well.
- ii) Bottom line is that the Israelites were so large in number, Moses had to set up men to be in charge of groups so we learn to obey commands. If God can bless them in numbers that great, think how much He wants to bless our futures if we're willing to trust Him to guide our lives in the future. That's the point of these verses.
10. Verse 14: You answered me, "What you propose to do is good."
- a) To understand Deuteronomy in general, one has to remember that it is a big speech or a series of speeches all given at one gathering. Moses is speaking to a generation of people who were not born or children when the plagues occurred in Egypt roughly 40 years ago. The point of recounting Israel's history to date is to reassure all these people about to go into the Promised Land that God will guide them even though Moses Himself won't be their leader. That's why Moses is reassuring them about group leaders in place as he says that the Israelites already agreed to this plan of divisional leadership.
- b) The reason you and I should care about this stuff is the reminder that God is still going to guide us for His glory even if we lose say, our parents or our favorite mentor. The reason God set up human government on local, regional and national levels is for our benefit to help us when we have our own issues. That's the underlying point here.

11. Verse 15: So I took the leading men of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have authority over you--as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials. ¹⁶ And I charged your judges at that time: Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien. ¹⁷ Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it. ¹⁸ And at that time I told you everything you were to do.
 - a) The short version is that each group of 10 families had a leader to make decisions. Above them was a leader for 50 families. Above them was one for 100, then one for 1,000. They set up this way so that if there were disputes among them, those leaders can make wise decisions. It was also the way Moses communicated with this large multitude traveling through the wilderness.
 - b) OK John, so what? So this large group of probably 2,000,000 people camped just outside of Israel are organized. We get the idea they are set for war because they're organized by ranks. We get the idea that Moses is preparing them for life in the Promised Land. How does any of this affect me? The point for us is well: life is scary. We don't have a visible God to tell us what to do next. God does not say to us, "Now go do this, then go do that" and then I'll be happy. My opening question of "I believe in Jesus, now what" holds the idea that God simply wants us to look at our situation, make the best decision possible given what is in front of us, and having the boldness to do something, anything that can make a difference for Him in the world around us.
 - c) The other thing to catch in these verses is the issue of no "partiality". That just means if we are judging a case where we have to make a decision of who's right and who's wrong we don't show favorites based on money, power or prestige that someone may have. We just make the best decisions possible based on the situation at hand. That alone is a great example of my lesson title of "now what do we do" once we are save. OK, enough of all of that time for Moses to recite more of their recent history:
12. Verse 19: Then, as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful desert that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰ Then I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. ²¹ See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."
 - a) First, remember that when you see the word "Horeb", think Mount Sinai, as they are two names for the same place. Moses is effectively saying is about 40 years ago, God told us to go from Mount Sinai through a horrible wilderness to the land of Israel. Now don't be afraid, but go forward and conquer that land. The reason Moses is reciting this history is to help them get past their fears. The point is the previous generation was punished for a 40 year period because they failed to trust God out of a fear of what could happen to them if they went into the land of Israel.
 - b) As we read this section, I don't want us to think about the historical aspect as much as I'd like us to think about what is it we fear. Do we fear not having enough money to pay our bills? Do we fear the pain of injury or death? Do we fear being embarrassed if we say the wrong thing in a big situation coming up? The point here is the previous generation died out of fear of what could happen to them. Moses is now warning this next generation to not repeat their parents mistakes and trust God despite whatever it is we fear can happen to us.
 - c) In summary, from Verse 19 all the way to the end of the chapter is going to be a lecture on the topic of "Don't let this happen to you". It's not here to teach us history as it is to show us how God wants us to overcome our own fears so that we can use our lives to make a difference for Him in the world around us. On that happy note, back to the story.

13. Verse 22: Then all of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to." ²³ The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. ²⁴ They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and explored it. ²⁵ Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."
- a) The next bit of history we have here is about how the Israelites sent 12 spies into the land of Israel to check it out. As most of us know by now, this turned out to be a bad idea, as most of them came back with a discouraging report of how tough it will be to do what it is that God wants them to do."
 - b) What the text is teaching us here is that it wasn't Moses idea to send the spies, but Moses "shrugged his shoulders" and said in effect, "OK, why not?" He then recites the positive aspect of their report of how they brought back some fruit to show that the land of Israel is a good land for growing crops. Moses didn't mention the part of how those spies also said that there were big walled cities and giants lived in that land. The point here is that Moses is trying to teach the Israelites to overcome whatever fears they could have of what could happen to them. Remember this speech so far is about encouragement. It's Moses saying in effect, "Yes life is hard, but God is here with us to guide us through whatever it is we have to deal with and He wants to work through us to give us victory over what we need to face in our future.
 - c) Think of the story this way: Suppose we believe God is leading us to do a missionary trip somewhere. We hear stories of horrible things occurring where we're supposed to go and we don't go forward out of fear. Or suppose there is a war coming up and we now must go and face an enemy that wants us dead. Or suppose we're facing a deadly disease. My point is how do we have the strength to face what it is that God has laid in our lap? That is where our trust in God gives us the strength and the boldness to face what we wish we didn't have to face but know it's necessary. That's how one is to read this opening chapter of this book, as an example of how God encourages us when we're dealing with fear. OK, time to read on:
14. Verse 26: But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. ²⁷ You grumbled in your tents and said, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. ²⁸ Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.' "
- a) Speaking of being afraid of what could go wrong, I present these verses here. Remember that Moses is reciting history to the Israelites. He's telling this large audience that about 40 years earlier, your parents failed to go into the Promised Land out of fear of what can happen to them. Moses states how they "grumbled in their tents". To put it simply, when the spies reported how scary it would be to go conquer the land, the Israelites didn't rebel there on the spot but went home and started grumbling there.
 - b) Believe it or not, that leads me back to my lesson theme of "I believe Jesus died for my sins now what". That previous generation was lead by God, they saw the plagues that Egypt had suffered and saw God make a path through the Red Sea. Now when it came for them to go do what God wanted them to do, they complained in their homes that they can't do what God wants them to. The point for you and me is that no one ever said living out the Christian life was going to be easy. Living as God desires we live can be terrifying as we don't know what the future holds. The reason God hates "grumbling" is because it gets us to not trust in His promises for us. Remember, "where God leads, God provides". If we believe God is calling us to do something, we have to remember that He provides the will and the boldness to get it done. Whether we have to go on a missionary trip, or say deal with cancer, the point is God is there to guide us through it all and do it for His glory.

- c) OK, time to get technical for the moment and explain a few literal things about this text: Moses uses both the words "Canaanites" and "Amorites" to describe the people living in the land of Israel. The word "Canaanites" is a general term describing who lives in that area. The Amorites were the specific group of people and the dominate tribe living in the land of Israel at that time. My point is don't worry about those terms. Both describe who is living there at that time. The text also mentions the Anakites. That's a word describing a race of people who were giants (think one or two feet taller than most people.) As we go through the next few chapters, we'll read of other words to describe those people. My point is again, don't get too obsessed over those names or titles. Just realize that there are difficult obstacles to overcome for the Israelites to actually conquer that land just as there are difficult obstacles that we have to overcome as we live to make a difference for God.
- i) If you get the idea that God wants to guide us and give us the boldness to do what He wants us do as His servants, then one gets the idea of "I'm saved, now what".
 - ii) In the meanwhile, time for Moses to recite more history of "fear":
15. Verse 29: Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. ³⁰ The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, ³¹ and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."
- a) Remember that we're reading a "graduation speech" of Moses speaking to a large group of Israelites and Moses is recounting Israelites history with their parent's generation. What he is saying is effectively, "remember when your parents did this and that"? Realize how they suffered for not trusting in God. Now please, don't make the same mistake as it cost your parents their lives." This is God saying through Moses, I know it's difficult for you to go forward as you don't know what's going to happen in your future. I know what lies ahead looks scary, but trust that God is there guiding us through whatever it is we have to face and He wants to lead us for His glory.
 - b) I can just hear some of you saying, "Well, that was then. However, you don't know what I have to deal with or how difficult or impossible my situation is". God is saying to us just as He is saying to these Israelites, I want to lead all of you for My glory. I want to use our lives to make a difference for Me. Don't let fear get the best of you as it did that previous generation that failed to trust Me. Yes I know your situation looks impossible, but if you are willing to trust Me, I will guide you (and me) through it for My glory.
 - c) Notice the word picture of Verse 31. It says that God "carried you and a father carries his son". No God did not literally carry the Israelites as if God has two huge arms. The point is that just as God got the Israelites out of Egypt and kept them alive for the last 40 years through a section of real estate where it's practically impossible to live, so God wants to get us through our own wilderness so that we can enter our own "Promised Land" to trust Him with every aspect of our lives as we live to make a difference for Him.
16. Verse 32: In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, ³³ who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.
- a) The way I relate to the wilderness is I always think of the drive from Los Angeles to Las Vegas Nevada, as that drive isn't that far from where I live. About half way through that drive, there is a famous large billboard that reads "Welcome to Death Valley". That sign has a real, actual thermometer showing the temperature. Whenever I drove past that sign I always thought, "Who would want to live in Death Valley?" Yes there are those who do like parts of that area, but to me the name of that place implies death. My point is to reach either the large cities of Las Vegas or Los Angeles, one has to drive through Death Valley. The point is just as God can get us through our own Death Valley's to get us to where He wants us to go, so He guided the Israelites through their own Death Valley at that time. We know they made it simply by the fact Jewish people exist to this day.

- b) To state the obvious some more, the Israelites didn't have air conditioned cars to get them through that wilderness of a location. That's why we read that God created a fire to keep the Israelites warm at night and a cloud covering to keep them cool during the daytime as they traveled through their own "Death Valley".
 - c) OK, so God did miracles for them to keep them alive. Where's my cloud covering and my pillar of fire to guide me? The answer is our bibles and prayer. Those are the gifts God gives to us so He can guide us through our own wilderness situations so that He can and does guide us for His glory. My point is if you are alive and have the ability to read what I am writing, then realize that God has "carried us so far" through our lives, so we should trust Him to carry us the rest of the way. While we don't have a literal pillar of fire saying to us in effect, "Stop here, or turn here", God makes it obvious to us in His own way and on His timing what He wants us to do. In the meantime we just make the best decisions we can based on the information at hand, just like the Israelites had to do here and now.
17. Verse 34: When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore:³⁵ "Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers,³⁶ except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly."
- a) Verse 34 opens with an interesting question: Can God get angry and say things for us that will effect the rest of our lives? First, let me address the issue of God getting angry: I hold the view that God is perfect by definition and therefore, knows all things. If He knows all things then He can't learn. (See Isaiah 46:10 as an example.) When I read of God is angry, I see it as God revealing to us how He feels about sin. It's not like, "I'm disappointed that you've sinned too much." It's more like, "you're beyond help and I'm doing what I have to do in order to teach future generations how I feel about sin". From our perspective, it's as if God is angry at the moment, when we sense God reacting to what we know is wrong.
 - b) What I'm getting at is the idea of there can be a point in one's life where a nonbeliever can reach a point where it's too late for them to turn to God. Can we ever know when one is at that point? Never, but God reveals that fact to us that it is. As I heard one pastor put it, "Don't go down that path in life, the road is greased and it's harder to turn back". Since we don't know when one has hit that point, we witness to all people, but we must also accept that God can harden the hearts of those who have already decided to strongly turn from Him in the first place. SO if we don't know when someone has hit that point, why tell us about it? So we don't blame ourselves if someone rejects God his or her entire life.
 - c) Meanwhile, I believe we left off describing how God is condemning the whole generation that saw Him do the great miracles of crossing the Red Sea and the miracles in Egypt. He is saying effectively, "They've been given lots of information and because they don't trust Me to go forward, I'm rejecting them AS they have rejected Me." With the exception of 2 people, this whole generation failed to trust Me and now they'll suffer the consequences.
 - d) Does this mean as Christians we can sin too much and lose our salvation? No the issue is not salvation, but enjoying what the Promised Land represents, "Living the full rich life of trusting God with every aspect of our lives and living to enjoy that benefit." My point is there may have been saved and unsaved people among the multitudes that had to die out in the desert thousands of years ago, but none of them (except two) will experience what God wants us to experience, which is a life full of joy based on trusting Him to guide us.
 - e) OK, who is this Caleb guy that Moses is singling out? He is one of the two spies that gave a good report about the Promised Land. Caleb said in effect, "Yes the Promised Land has giants and cities with big walls, but so what? We have a God who can part the sea and do great miracles. Why should we fear the consequences when God can lead us?" Caleb is a great example of someone willing to trust God to lead his life as he goes into that land. He is also of the tribe of Judah, but not in the Messianic line. My point is Caleb is also meant to be an illustration of how someone trusting in God is a great example to us.

18. Verse 37: Because of you the LORD became angry with me also and said, "You shall not enter it, either.³⁸ But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it.³⁹ And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad--they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it.
- a) Let's start with Verse 37. Moses is effectively saying that God was angry with Moses to the point where he too could not enter that land. Let me briefly explain why: Back in Numbers Chapter 16, there was an incident where Moses was angry at the Israelites for not listening to him. God told Moses to speak to a rock. That rock was used earlier in that book to miraculously provide water for the Israelites in the desert. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck it again. OK< of all the sins one could commit, why is hitting that rock so bad it kept Moses out of the Promised Land? Because "Moses blew the model":
 - i) Let me explain from a New Testament perspective. Jesus only had to be crucified once for our sins and not over and over again. Therefore, just as Jesus didn't have to die over and over again for our sins, we just "speak to Him" and not strike Him again for taking the price of our sins. God told Moses to speak to the rock, not to hit again. Because Moses blew that model for our salvation, he too had to die with the previous generation. Realize that Paul said in 1st Corinthians 10:4 that Jesus is that "rock" that was in the wilderness.
 - ii) But isn't that a cruel punishment? Why make Moses suffer for hitting a rock? Do I believe Moses is saved? Of course. However, because he himself didn't trust God to guide his life at that moment, it also represents the idea of what the Promised Land is all about, living the full rich life of trusting God no matter the situation.
 - b) Remember that Chapter 1 is Moses reciting the history of the generation that died off in the desert. Moses is giving this speech to the children of that generation. He is saying in effect, "Don't be like your parents. They didn't trust God and suffered the consequences. I want all of you to learn from that mistake and that's why I'm being punished and that is what I want all of you to avoid by learning from me."
 - i) You may recall earlier in the chapter, that it was stated it has been 40 years and 11 months since the Israelites left Egypt. Moses knew he was part of the generation that was sentenced to die in that forty-year window of time. That means Moses knew he only had less than a month to life, and that's why he wanted to give this big sermon to the next generation as Moses knew his time was almost up.
 - c) All of this leads to the reference to Joshua here in these verses. Joshua is Moses' assistant and yes it's the same Joshua that will lead the Israelites in the Promised Land in the next bible book, the book of Joshua. He was also the only other spy besides Caleb who gave a good report about the Promised Land and like Caleb wanted to encourage the Israelites to enter that land. I think Caleb was singled out first as an example of good leadership. We have Joshua singled out second as he was trained to be the next leader of the Israelites as they go into that land.
 - i) That leads to the reference to encouragement here in these verses. It's like Moses saying, "I've been training this guy to be the next leader, so encourage him to lead you well as he's been prepared for this role."
 - ii) One can also think of it as an example of how God always separates the offices of our political and religious leaders. Caleb is an example of a spiritual leader as his example is a good one to follow as how we are to act once we do believe in God. Joshua is an example of our political leaders appointed to lead us as we go out into the world to make a difference for God in our lives.
 - iii) Bottom line is these are the only two men of the previous generation going into the Promised Land, one as an example of faith and one as God's appointed leader.

19. Verse 40: But as for you, turn around and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea. " ⁴¹ Then you replied, "We have sinned against the LORD. We will go up and fight, as the LORD our God commanded us." So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country. ⁴² But the LORD said to me, "Tell them, 'Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.' "
- a) Remember that Moses is reciting history to his audience. This is like the old expression, "Those that fail to learn from history, repeat its mistakes." This is Moses telling the crowd look how your parents had to die out here in the middle of nowhere. (The wilderness.) When your parents' generation were told the news that they couldn't enter the Promised Land, that's when I commanded the whole group to turn back away from Israel towards the Red Sea. That's when your parents cried out, "OK, we understand that we blew it and didn't believe Caleb and Joshua. However we learned from our mistakes and we want to go conquer that land right now." Then Moses gave the response in Verse 42 that it is too late for them and they would (did) lose when they attacked that land.
 - b) If God is a god of "second chances" and He wants the Israelites to go conquer that land of Israel, why didn't He forgive the Israelites of that sin and lead them to victory back at that point in history? After all, they were effectively confessing their sins of unbelief and now are willing to attack. Why did God allow them to fail? To teach them and us to not try to do things without His help. The point is willpower can only go so far. The idea of taking a deep breath and just going forward based on our own strength will only get us so far in life. Making a difference for God requires Him to lead us to make that difference and not just saying, "OK, I'll go for it on my own".
 - i) The problem of course is that God does not verbally guide us to do this or that like He did for this generation. SO how do we know when and where God is leading us to make that difference? The answer starts with prayer and regular study and obedience to His word. Much of life is obviously trial and error. For example, in Paul's travels, I think he just went from place to place and he suffered much while preaching the Gospel. My point is we just move forward, make the best decisions possible and trust that God is leading us. That's the "now what" of my lesson title based on the idea that we're saved, now what.
 - ii) Bottom line is that previous generation tried to attack in the Promised Land based on their own strength and failed miserably. That's the lesson Moses is reminding this next generation hearing this spec. Don't go where God doesn't want you to go in the first place. He'll lead you into the Promised Land but don't try to enjoy that land without Him leading you there in the first place. Meanwhile, Moses is finishing his history recall he witnessed roughly 38 years prior to this speech:
20. Verse 43: So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the LORD's command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. ⁴⁴ The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. ⁴⁵ You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you. ⁴⁶ And so you stayed in Kadesh many days--all the time you spent there.
- a) Notice the word "you" in the first sentence in Verse 43. Moses is speaking to the second generation of Israelites, but the "you" here refers to the first generation. This is his way of saying, "Don't repeat their mistakes. Learn from them so that you can all enjoy the great blessings God wants to give us by trusting Him with every aspect of our lives. That's what the Promised Land represents and that's why we should care about this book.
 - b) Now for the specifics of history: The previous generation moved forward into the land of Israel and the locals who lived there chased the Israelites out of there. God turned a "deaf ear" to their cries for help at this point.

- c) It doesn't mean God still didn't care for them at that point. After all God still had "manna" rain down from heaven every day for food during that 40 year period. There was still the cloud that covered them as they went and whatever the pillar of fire was. Just as when we are disobedient to God, He still loves us and cares for us. He also disciplines us so we do want to choose to be obedient to Him with every aspect of our lives. My point here is He allowed the Israelites to suffer defeat in order to teach them and us how we do suffer in life when we fail to obey His commandments. As Christians, we're saved if we do believe Jesus is in charge of our lives and that God raised Him from the dead. My obvious point by now is "now what"? The "now what" is God wants us to live a life of obedience to Him not because we have to, but because we want to. It's the best way to live our lives. That's what the Promised Land is all about as I've been pounding in our heads the whole lesson.
 - i) The previous generation failed to listen to God then and had to go live out the rest of their lives in the wilderness for the next 38 years until all of them died off except for Moses who will die in less than a month, and Caleb and Joshua who'll lead the next generation into the Promised Land.
 - d) Let me end with something I've always found fascinating about this story. If you read the first five books of Moses, it is actually pretty quiet about what the Israelites actually did in that 38-year period. We know God provided shelter, guidance, food and water for them as they survived during those years. My point is the bible is pretty quiet about what they actually did during that time. The lesson is, "It was such a waste of time, that it's not even recorded for us to study." The classic joke again, is what did Moses do during all of that time? Funerals. If thousands died daily during that time, that is a lot of funerals and a lot of bodies to bury.
 - i) I also found it interesting that in the book of Joshua, the generation who entered the land had to circumcise all the males as the Israelites didn't perform that ritual as required on the eighth day of a male's life during the wilderness time. It's just another example of how those 38 years were such a waste, that I suspect none of God's laws were obeyed during that time, including circumcision. (See Joshua Chapter 5, for my support on that issue.)
21. OK, enough history for one lesson. Hope you enjoyed this lesson and join me as I go through this book about understanding what God expects of us as Christians once we do trust Him to guide our lives for His glory. With that said, let me close in prayer:
22. Heavenly Father, first we are grateful for our salvation. We are grateful that You alone have paid the full price for our that salvation and there's nothing we can do earn it or add to it. Help us and guide us to use our lives to make a difference for You out of gratitude for what You have already done for us. Help us to live the type of life you want us to live as we live in the Promised Land that you've meant for us to enjoy as we use our lives for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.