

Deuteronomy 27-28: Blessings and Curses

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Let's go to Deuteronomy chapter 27. We have spent a lot of time in the Book of Deuteronomy going over the law, piece by piece, step by step, as Moses takes time with the Israelites to reiterate the law. As we've said many times in our study of Deuteronomy, the nation of Israel is right on the precipice of going into the land. They're right there. They're right there at the shore of the Jordan. They can see across the Jordan. They can see the land of promise that was promised way back to their forefather Abraham and so forth. And now it's there. It's tangible. They can taste it practically. We're about to go in.

But before they do, Moses begins this lengthy reiteration of the law, which is the Book of Deuteronomy. It's the book of remembrances, the book of reconnecting with what God has told the people of Israel.

Well, guess what? Essentially, the reiteration of the law is over and now Moses is giving in these last chapters his final directives for the nation of Israel. And what we're going to be dealing with tonight is the exhortations from Moses to the nation to remember and how, how to remember.

And that's an important thing for us to because remembering is a good thing for us to think about as well. We need to remember God has given us things to do to remember, like communion, do this, do that in remembrance of Me. So we too need to have those reminders. And so I think you're going to find some things in these chapters. We're going to try to cover a couple of chapters tonight. But I hope we're going to find some things here that are going to help us along those lines.

It says in verse 1 of chapter 27, *“Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today. ² And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster. ³ And you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you.” (ESV)*

Here you are at the outset of the promised land. You're about to go in. I've given you the law, but that's not where it's going to end. Now I'm commanding you, when you cross over, and you get over there, I want you to take some stones; large stones, and cover them with plaster. And he's going to talk about what he wants them to do.

He tells them to write the words of the law on these stones, and this is to be a remembrance. We'll talk about it here a bit more, and he begins to reiterate.

“⁴And when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. ⁵And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. (once again) You (He says) shall wield no iron tool on them; ⁶you shall build an altar to the LORD your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God, ⁷and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God.”

So two things they've been told now to get ready and build. First of all, they're to have these big stones, covered with plaster, on which they're going to write the commands of the Law. And this is to be for them the construction of a visual display reminder of everything that they had heard and everything that Moses had spoken to them.

And, I can appreciate this as a visual learner. You probably wonder why, I so many times put up passages on the screen for you. It's because I'm visual. I do it because I need it. And so I probably assume you do too. Although I know some of you probably can learn just as fine in an auditory sort of a way, but I'm very visual.

And so I, when I go to church and I'm sitting and listening to somebody preach and teach, if they are doing a passage, they're studying through a passage, that's all good and fine. But if they start quoting verses and they don't make me turn to it, I'll get lost. And so I really like this kind of a visual reminder that Moses is giving the people of Israel. I should say, the Lord is giving through Moses to say, build or erect this, literally this monument, if you will.

Now the altar that they're also supposed to build is different. This is where they're going to offer sacrifices, where they're going to take some of the meat of those sacrifices. They're going to eat, have fellowship offerings with the Lord. And he's told them to rejoice together because they've come into the land and God kept His promise and here we are and so forth. But you see where there's two things going on. I want you to build a reminder and I want you to build an altar on which these sacrifices are going to be made.

Now, what's interesting about this altar not the part that's getting plastered, but the altar is that God tells them to make it out of just stones. Probably they pick out of the river or maybe on the banks of the river or something like that. And he said, I don't want you to touch them. I don't want you to take a tool and I don't want you to shape them. I don't want you to do anything except take these rocks, put them together and build an altar with it. I don't want it to be the work of any kind of craftsman. I want it to be a simple sort of a thing.

And it's interesting because the altar is the means by which we think of approaching God, right? We talk about coming to the altar. And isn't it interesting, in this particular case, God is communicating to them that in their approach of Him, there needs to be nothing done by man. And I really think that this is a reminder to them that as they approach God, that part is not done by works. Right?

And it's the same thing that's true for you and I. Approaching God is not accomplished by works. And so He says in the creating of this altar, as you use this altar to approach Me with your sacrifices and offerings, make sure that you don't make it out of anything that is a work of your hands, in any kind of detail or craftsmanship. It's just rocks. So you're going to approach Me in this sense without works.

It's a reminder of what we read in Ephesians. Now let me put this one up on the screen for you as a reminder, as if you would need a reminder of this. He says,

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For by grace (Paul writes) you have been saved through faith. And this (he says) is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Now this might, this reminder or this thing that I'm talking to you about might hit a strange chord with some of you if I'm talking to you about God talking to the people of Israel about no works. Because wait a minute, isn't the law all about works? Isn't it all about keeping the law? Isn't it all about, you got to do this in order to get that, right? So you think about the law as really all about human works. The gospel of grace, obviously not. That's the opposite, it's all about what Jesus did.

So, why would God go through this process of telling them to build an altar, but not by works, to remind them of not by works in their approach to God? You got to remember something about the law of Israel. Within the context of the Mosaic Law, and all the promises that went with it, God never promised them that they would go to heaven if they kept the law. It's not there. You're not going to find it.

God never said in the Mosaic Covenant that Keep my law and you'll go to heaven. People get so mixed up about this. They think that we go to heaven today because we believe in Jesus, but the Jews way back then, they got saved by keeping the law. No!

They kept the law and the promise for that was, I'll bless you in the land. We're going to go through in the next chapter all of the blessings that God is going to lay out for them if they obey the law. And you're not going to find anywhere listed there, going to heaven. Oh, and by the way, you guys get a free ticket to heaven if you keep the law. That's not the case.

So you see, approaching God, still, even back in their day, was not by works, but was by faith. Even then. The Law, the Mosaic Law, is not about approaching God. It's about being obedient and receiving the land as a blessing.

What God communicated to the Israelites was not, approach Me, it was, stay away. Remember? When God was giving the law through Moses, you'll remember this on Mount Sinai. What did God say to the people? Stay back. Don't come close. You even touch the foot of the mountain and you will die. Right?

God was impressing upon them His holiness, but He was saying to them what is part and parcel of the Mosaic Covenant. Listen, I'm giving you a covenant that's all about works. I don't want you guys starting to think that you're going to approach me based on that. You stay back. You stay back. Stay back. Even the, only the Arianic priests could go into the Holy of Holies. And the Levites were the only ones who could carry the Ark of the Covenant. The other people had to stay a long way back. Don't touch, don't get near.

So you see the Mosaic Covenant is not about drawing near to God. It's about staying away from God because it's based on works. It's predicated upon a promise for the land. So very important that we keep those things separate.

He says in verse 8, and this now he's getting back to talking about the stones that are going to have the plaster over the top of them. He says, *“And you shall*

write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly.” And “⁹ Then Moses and the...”

And by the way, the “*very plainly*,” “*very plainly...*” Think about that, “*very plainly*.” What did God want the law to be as it relates to how it was communicated on those stones? He wanted it to be accessible to everybody, didn't He? He said, write it very plainly.

You know what impressed me when I went to Bible college? It impressed me that when I started learning the basics of Greek, which is what the New Testament is largely written in, I found out that there's all kinds of different forms of Greek. I didn't know that before. And I found out that the form that is used for the majority, the vast majority of the New Testament, is a kind of Greek called, Koine Greek.

And then I found out something else about Koine Greek. It was the kind of Greek that children spoke; uneducated children, in the streets. And that's what the majority of the New Testament is written in.

And you know what that hit me? It just, it hit me like a ton of bricks. God wanted His Word to be plain. He wanted it to be written plainly, so that everybody could understand. Yeah, and we see it right here, too. Make sure you write on these stones plainly what the Word has to say.

Then Moses, verse 9, “*Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, “Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God. ¹⁰ You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today.”*”

¹¹ *That day Moses charged the people, saying, ¹² “When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: (and he's talking about the leaders of these tribes and the tribes are) Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. ¹³ And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.”*

Now, here's what's interesting about this. Do you see how much God is doing, how much He's preparing for the people to go into the land by these remembrances and reiterations of things? They're supposed to go in there, write the Law on these big stones, build this altar, and fellowship with God, and rejoice that He's kept His promise. And then, they're to gather on these two opposing hillsides, they call them Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, but they're not mountains as you and I would necessarily view mountains. They're hillsides

mostly, but they create a rather natural amphitheater, which people, by the way, have tested, believe it's...

It's interesting, I guess it shouldn't be surprising. People have actually, they read this passage and they've said, wow, God told the people to be on this mountain and that mountain. And obviously there's a bunch of people in between in the valley and we should see how you can hear things. And I guess it. I can't say this firsthand because I haven't been there, but I heard that it worked really good. In fact, let me show you a picture of these two hillsides.



Now you, there are structures there today and that's what it looked like today, but you have Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. And it's basically where ancient Shechem was located and this is where the people were to gather on one side and on the other. And they were from these different tribes to speak forth the blessings which are the promises that God lays before them for their obedience. And the curses which are the consequences that God was going to lay before them if they were to disobey the Word of God. And that is exactly where it took place.

So let's keep reading. Verse 14, *“And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice:*

¹⁵ “‘Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’”

Now, what we're going to see in the verses that are following here is the same sort of a responsive refrain. You're going to hear the Levites reading a curse and the people responding with, amen.

Verse 16, “*‘Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*” Remember, this is how life in Israel was supposed to go. No dishonoring of parents.

Verse 17, “*‘Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor's landmark.’* (which is a way of changing the boundary lines between property, obviously for the purpose of gaining more land) *And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

¹⁸ “*‘Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road.’* (in God's economy and God's kingdom, there needs to be the care and concern for people, even with physical issues and so forth, limitations) *And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

¹⁹ “*‘Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

²⁰ “*‘Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife, (and this speaks of a man who takes his stepmother, essentially, after his father passes away) because he has uncovered his father's nakedness.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

²¹ “*‘Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal.’* (which is bestiality) *And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

²² “*‘Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

²³ “*‘Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

²⁴ “*‘Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

²⁵ “*‘Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

(and finally) ²⁶ “*‘Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

So this is part of this process you can see for the nation of Israel going into the land. There's a lot of ceremony involved here, isn't there? Whereby they repeat

and affirm and confirm. This is what we believe. Amen. This is what we believe. Amen. It's interesting, isn't it? Now remember, remember, that all of this is what God requires to bless them in the land, to bless them in the land. Okay.

Deuteronomy chapter 28. Now this chapter is Moses reiterating again, reaffirming again, the curses and the blessings. And believe me, some of them get very graphic when it comes to consequences that he is now laying before Israel based on how they respond to the Lord.

And the first, you're going to find that the first 14 verses speak of the blessings that will follow obedience, whereas the last 54 verses describe the curses or the consequences that will fall upon the people if they are to forsake the Lord.

Oh, and by the way, I want you to know something going into this. One word that you're going to hear a lot in this chapter, as it relates to the consequences of their disobedience and the rejection of God is the word, destroyed. And God is going to talk about the things that are going to come upon them, and He's going to say, and this is going to happen to you until you are destroyed.

Now, I want you to be careful in your own personal, mental interpretation of that word, because this word does not mean, obliterated. That's what you and I might, that's the word we'd probably use if we were describing a city or a town that maybe got obliterated by an earthquake, or a flood, or even a bomb, or something like that. We'd say, man, it's just, it was just obliterated. It was just destroyed. Well, we would use those words, synonymously. This word basically means ruined with respect to purpose. Let me explain what I mean by that.

When God called the Jews to a very unique relationship with Him, and there's no other nation on the face of the earth that entered into a covenant like this with God. God had a purpose and it wasn't just to bless Israel. It was to bless the world through Israel. We forget that sometimes. God had a plan.

God had a plan to use the Jews to bless all the nations on the earth. When God promised Abraham what He did, He said, and from your seed, I will bless all nations, right? (Genesis 22:18) Now that was originally intended to refer to the whole nation of Israel. It ended up primarily just referring to Messiah because He was the only one that walked in obedience. But you need to understand that.

And so when God says, this is going to happen to you until you are destroyed, it means until the purpose for which I ordained this relationship, this covenant, and this people is ruined, is completely, yeah, spoiled. The purpose that I had

for your life will be spoiled. He's not saying that every single Jew living upon the face of the earth will die. That's what you and I would think of when we think of the word, destroyed. You're going to be just destroyed. Well, then why did, why weren't the Jews destroyed? Because that's not what that word means. It means you'll be ruined. You'll be spoiled.

And so Israel will have survivors. Israel did have survivors from even all of the things that God said would come upon them. But for those people, His intended purpose for them was spoiled. Okay.

Verse 1. *“And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.*

⁷ *“The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ⁸ The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ⁹ The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹ And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, (and that means you'll be in a place of leadership, you won't be following) and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”* Stop there.

Did you see anywhere in there that God promised them heaven if they kept the Law? It's not there. He didn't say, oh, and by the way, then you'll go to heaven

too. So understand that this is a physical covenant. This is not a spiritual covenant. This is all about land and the blessings of being in that land. The spiritual blessings would have come had they walked in obedience and bend that blessing to the nations, but of course they didn't. So those short 14 verses of the chapter deal with the richness of God's promises related to those blessings. But the rest of the chapter is pretty negative.

Starts here in verse 15. *“But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.”* Notice the same word is used to describe the consequences as it is the blessings and it is the word, overtake.

We think of overtake pretty much exclusively in a negative context. The storm overtook them. Their enemy overtook them, right? The disease overtook him. But here, He's using it in both a positive and a negative instance. Your blessings will overtake you. That's a really cool thought. But so also will these curses He says if you are, if you will not obey.

Verse 16, *“Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.”* Notice there's a corresponding opposite to what we read in the blessings.

“¹⁷ Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ¹⁸ Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ¹⁹ Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

²⁰ “The LORD will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. ²¹ The LORD will make the pestilence stick to you until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ²² The LORD will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish. ²³ And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. ²⁴ The LORD will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

²⁵ “The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶ And your dead body shall be food for

all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away.”

And by the way, it was considered in the Jewish Middle Eastern mind the worst of the worst. Not being receiving a proper burial that was considered horrible beyond imagining and the Lord speaks of that here.

“²⁷ The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed. ²⁸ The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind, ²⁹ and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you. ³⁰ You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall ravish her. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit. ³¹ Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat any of it. Your donkey shall be seized before your face, but shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, but there shall be no one to help you. ³² Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all day long, but you shall be helpless. ³³ A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually, ³⁴ so that you are driven mad by the sights that your eyes see. ³⁵ The LORD will strike you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

³⁶ “The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. ³⁷ And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you away. ³⁸ You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. ³⁹ You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. ⁴⁰ You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off. ⁴¹ You shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity. ⁴² The cricket (or your Bible may say, locust) shall possess all your trees and the fruit of your ground. ⁴³ The sojourner (or traveler) who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. ⁴⁴ He shall lend to you, and you shall not lend to him. He shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

⁴⁵ *“All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you. ⁴⁶ They shall be a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring forever. ⁴⁷ Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, ⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. ⁴⁹ The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, ⁵⁰ a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. ⁵¹ It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish.*

⁵² *“They shall besiege you in all your towns, (that means you’ll be locked inside your cities and villages, unable to leave. That’s what a sieging is) until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you. ⁵³ And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you.”*

The sieges were meant to basically do just that. They would starve people out. They would set up siege works around the city, slowly beginning to build those siege works, so that they could climb the walls. Sometimes they would lay in wait or lay, besiege a city for years. Sometimes sieges would last 4 or 5 years. It depends on how long the people in the city could last. If they had running water through there, they could last longer, but eventually their food's going to run out.

And these very promises came upon Israel. They were besieged in such a way that the food ran out and the people, some of the women literally began to eat their children. They literally gave in to that sort of a thing because they were starving.

And you and I think, oh, that's horrible. I would never do that. Well, you've never been in a place where, you've just lost your mind because of hunger and starvation. And the things that come upon a person at a time like that is, it's hard to even imagine.

In fact he goes on here in verse 54 to say, *“The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left,”*

In other words, the most tender hearted and sensitive man among you will come to the point of saying this is my food. In other words, you are going to be reduced to animals. Okay, that's what he's saying.

You ever seen animals fight over food? You ever seen a couple of dogs go for the same piece of meat, and one of them gets there first? And what's he do as soon he gets there? He puts his head down, grabs onto the meat, and then goes, grrrr, right? And that's of course, that sign of just, get away. This is mine. Well, God says, you're going to be reduced to that. To that very sort of a thing.

Verse 55, *“so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns.”*

Verse 56 and 57 begin to speak of *“The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, (it says she) will begrudge to the husband she embraces, (to her, even her own flesh) to her son and to her daughter,”* And even begin to eat things that are unspeakable as it talks about in verse 57. And it's just, it's horrible.

He says, ⁵⁸ *“If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God,”* ⁵⁹ *then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting.* ⁶⁰ *And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you.* ⁶¹ *Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed.* ⁶² *Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God.* ⁶³ *And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.*

⁶⁴ *“And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.”* ⁶⁵ *And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot,*

but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. ⁶⁶ Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. ⁶⁸ And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.'" Wow, that's depressing, isn't it?

Let me ask you a question. We know, we know from reading the Scripture that these things came upon the Israelites. Here's the question I have for you though. Did they come upon everyone? The answer to that question is no, they did not. Because within the context of God's grace and mercy, there's always, always, always a place for repentance. And even if that repentance was not national, individuals who repented, we know, were spared.

We know that when God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was there. There was a man that he worked with, an assistant that he had, a servant, if you will who was a God fearing man. God gave through Jeremiah, a personal word to that man. He said, listen, I want you to know something, the walls of Jerusalem will fall because I'm about to judge my people for their sin, but you will escape unharmed.

I think about Josiah, king Josiah. You guys remember Josiah? He took the kingship at age 8, came from a pretty rotten parentage as well. By the time he was 16 years old, he began to seek the Lord. By the time he was in his 20s, he began to restore the temple and build the things back up. And while they were restoring the temple, they found the Book of the Law. It had been lost.

So they came back to report to the king. Well, here's what we found. The temple needs this. The temple needs that. We're repairing. I mean, they basically gave him a report. And then he said, oh, by the way, we found the Book of the Law in the temple.

Josiah said, bring it. And they brought it and they began to read it to him. And you know what they read? Just what you and I just read. And you know what king Josiah did? He tore his robes. He commanded the people of Israel to begin to fast and pray and repent.

And then they began to inquire of the Lord. And they went to this woman who was a prophetess to find out what the Lord had to say. And the Lord said, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears tingle of those who hear

it. For I will bring the every word of judgment upon Israel that I promised. But then she said, but to the king who sent you to me, the king who trembled at My Word, the king who broke his heart and rent his clothes before me when he heard this, I will deliver him. And he will not see this judgment in his lifetime.

Do you see, do you understand the mercy of God is always there. I think of one other king that really impressed me that way. I guess is used to impress the mercy of God. And that's king Manasseh, who came after Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a great king, but he had this son who was just a total worthless person.

I mean, Manasseh brought back things to Judah that his father had put away. All the idol worship and all the horrible, horrible things that these... Manasseh even sacrificed his children in the fire. And so God brought an enemy against him, the king of Assyria, who came and basically got him, captured him, and took him off to his own land.

And guess what Manasseh did while he was there? He repented. He cried out to God. What it said about Manasseh before that repentance, it said, no one did more evil than in Israel than Manasseh. Nobody. This guy topped them all. He was the worst of the worst in Judah of all the kings. And yet, when he repented, God's, God made note of it. Have you seen the repentance? Have you seen the broken heart of this man?

The Lord restored him. The Lord restored him back to Judah, back to his throne. And Manasseh spent the rest of his life knowing that Yahweh was God and he worshiped God for the rest of his life. But you know, the damage was done. The people of Israel continued to do all kinds of, heinous things.

Here's the point. God is a merciful God. Our God is a God of mercy. No matter what judgment may be coming for the sin of the world, the nation, whatever. God's mercy extends to all who come to Him, and who cry out to Him, and cry for that mercy.

But what we get from these two chapters, is fairly sobering. And the idea here is your choices in life have consequences. This is what we teach our kids, when they're little, at least we try to. We try to teach them that, life has consequences. You make a bad decision, you make a bad choice. And you get to, take the consequence that, that goes with it. That's not a difficult prophecy to make for a kid. You make a bad choice, you're going to have some bad consequences. What a man sows shall also shall he reap. Right. I mean, that's not difficult stuff other than that, we're not very good at making accurate prophecies; human beings, but this is one thing we know for sure.

Speaking of inaccurate prophecies, here's an example. In 1949, an article in Popular Mechanics, listen to this, predicted the coming downsizing of computers. Cause computers, were enormous and it says computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.

And then building on that shaky prophecy, a guy by the name of Ken Olson, the founder of Digital Equipment Corporation said in 1977, he said this, quote, *"there is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."* Are we good at making predictions or what? I love this one.

A Yale university management professor once commented on a paper turned in by a student. And he said, well, the concept that you wrote about in this paper is interesting and well formed, but in order to earn better than a C, your idea at least needs to be feasible. By the way, the paper was a proposal for an overnight delivery service, and the youthful author was Fred Smith, who went on to found Federal Express; FedEx. But his professor said, sorry, buddy, it's not going to work.

What's the point here? We're not good at charting the course of a lot of things in life, but there's one thing that we know for sure, the person who turns their back on God is going to deal with great difficulty.

The Bible says, the way of the transgressor is hard. (Proverbs 13:15) And there are more consequences, I think, connected to the simple decision to turn our back on God than just about anything else.

And although you and I are not under the Mosaic Covenant, this chapter or these two chapters that we've looked at tonight remind us that our lives are made up of choices.

And as Moses would later say, in this very book, we'll get to it when we get to the 30th chapter. He will say, see, *"I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction."* (Deuteronomy 30:15)

And the choice is ours. The choice was Israel's. The choice is ours.