

(Through the Bible) Deuteronomy 26-29

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's law in order to experience His blessings and avoid His curses.

Duration: 47:51

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:8-9, Deuteronomy 27:15 - 28:2, Deuteronomy 29:1-5, Deuteronomy 29:24, Deuteronomy 29:29

Topics: "Covenant Obedience", "Gods Providence"

Description

In this sermon, Moses addresses the children of Israel and reminds them of the covenant they have with God. He emphasizes that despite witnessing great miracles and signs, they have failed to truly perceive and understand God's work. Moses points out that God has provided for them during their 40 years in the wilderness, ensuring their clothes and shoes did not wear out and sustaining them without bread or wine. However, he laments that the people have not served the Lord with joyfulness and gratitude for all the blessings they have received. Moses also discusses the conditions of the covenant, which revolve around obedience to the law, and predicts the people's eventual failure to keep it.

Transcript

Deuteronomy, beginning with chapter 26. Again, it is important that we set the scene for you. Here is Moses, a hundred and twenty years old.

In just a few days, he's going to go up into the mountain and die. He is giving the last of the last instructions to the people of God. He is releasing the rains by which he has been guiding these people these forty years and turning them over now unto Joshua.

But Moses is sort of rehearsing for the children of Israel, again, the conditions by which they will enjoy this land. The conditions upon which God's blessings were predicated. For the children of Israel had a covenant relationship with God that revolved around the law and around their obedience to the law.

And the covenant that God established with the nation of Israel was they that do them shall live by them. In other words, it was a covenant that was established in their doing and keeping the law of God. Now Moses even predicted, as we'll get into it tonight, their failure to keep the law.

God knew that they wouldn't be able to keep it. And the failure has been predicted along with the resultant tragedies and curses that would come upon them for their failure. Now God has established a new

covenant with man that is no longer based upon the law and the keeping of the law.

But when Jesus took the cup with his disciples and he gave them the cup, he said, this is a new covenant that is in my blood which is shed for the remission of sins. So the new covenant that God has established with man is through Jesus Christ and the work of Jesus Christ. So that in this new covenant it is my believing in that work of Jesus Christ in my behalf by which I can now enjoy all of the blessings of God.

So I experience the blessings of God's grace upon my life. I experience all of these wonderful things from God, not because I'm so good and have kept so perfectly the law of God, but because I have now a new covenant relationship with God. It is through Jesus Christ and His finished work and I simply believe in that finished work of Christ and God imputes my faith for righteousness and blesses me.

Now if I were still living under the law I would be just as cursed as the children of Israel became because the law could make nothing righteous. It only pointed to a better covenant that was to come. So in Deuteronomy we have the rehearsal of the covenant and it's the establishing of the covenant whereby you come into the land, you obey these things and over and over you'll notice that He is pointing out obedience to the commands, obedience to the statutes, obedience, obedience, obedience and if you obey then this blessing will be yours.

You'll be blessed and blessed and blessed, but if you disobey then curse and I think there are more curses than there are blessings. Now I thank God that I can relate to God in the new covenant in Jesus Christ and thus I have been blessed and am blessed by God. Not for any righteousness that I have done or not for any righteousness that I have because that isn't the basis by which I am relating to God tonight.

I'm relating in that new covenant I am simply believing in Jesus Christ to wash me and cleanse me of all of my sins and to work in me His work of love as I submit my life to Him. That He might give to me the power and the capacities to live a life that is pleasing unto the Father. So as we get into chapter 26, He first of all speaks to them about when you come into the land and you begin to gather the fruit of the land, the first fruits of the land.

Now they weren't ready to gather anything for themselves until the third year. They were to plant but just let it go until the third year and then they would begin to reap. But when you gather together your harvest then you are to bring before the Lord actually the first of all of the fruit of the earth which thou shalt bring in thy land to the Lord that the Lord thy God gives to thee and thou shalt put it in a basket and shall go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name.

And you're to go in there and you're to profess that day unto the Lord thy God that I am come into the country which the Lord swore to my fathers. And so you're now to bring the first fruits of the land. You're to give them to God and you're to confess I am now in the land that God had promised.

The acknowledgement of the faithfulness of God to keep His promise because God had promised to Abraham that He would give him this land. So now you're in the land. Bring the first fruits to God and profess.

Make the confession God did keep His promise. Then interestingly in verse five and thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God a Syrian ready to perish was my father. He went down to Egypt and sojourned there with a few and became a nation great mighty and populous.

And so speaking of Jacob calling him a Syrian who went down to Egypt with just a few and yet while in Egypt in that four hundred year period of time God made them a great nation and God brought them out spoiling the Egyptians. And you're to rehearse actually God's great work in bringing you out and bringing you into the land that flows with milk and honey out of the bondage of Egypt into the blessings of God. And now bringing I bring the first fruits unto God of this glorious land that He has given to us.

And in verse 11 thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God has given unto thee and unto thine house thou and the Levite and the stranger that is among you. Again here is the commandment where God is commanding them to rejoice. God wants a happy people and God's people should be a happy people.

We should be the happiest people on the face of the earth. And what kind of a witness is it to God if His people are always depressed and down and sour and dour. God wants you to be a rejoicing people.

And in verse 12 when thou hast made an end of the tithing of all the tithes of your increase in the third year which is the year of tithing you've given it to the Levites and so forth thou shalt say to the Lord before the Lord thy God I have brought away the hallowed things out of my house and given them to the Levite the stranger the fatherless the widows. I've not transgressed the commandments neither have I forgotten them. I've not eaten of my thereof in my morning neither have I taken off thereof for unclean use or given off for the dead.

And thus he goes on with this again acknowledgment that God has brought them into the land that flows with milk and honey. And you must avouch the Lord this day to be thy God to walk in his ways to keep his statutes and his commandments his judgments and to hearken to his voice. All right again at this point you're to swear that God is your God actually that Jehovah is your God to walk in his ways to keep his commandments and all and for the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people who are obeying actually his commandments.

And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made in praise and in name and in honor. In chapter twenty seven when you come into the land you're to take these stones and you're to build a tower and you're to plaster it and then you're to write on the plaster of the tower the words of the law when you pass over into the land that God has given to you. Therefore it shall be when you have gone over Jordan verse four that ye shall set up these stones which I command you this day in Mount Ebal thou shalt plaster them with plaster and thou shalt build an altar unto the Lord thy God an altar of stones and thou shalt not lift any iron tool upon them thou shalt build an altar to the Lord thy God of whole stones and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy God and thou shalt offer peace offerings and thou shalt eat there and rejoice before the Lord thy God.

Thou shalt write upon the stones all of the words of this law very plainly. So they were to build this altar but they were not to they were not to carve the stones they were not to cut the stones they were to use just whole stones. No tool was to come upon them.

Now when God first commanded the building of altars they were to be built just out of earth. It is interesting that when they made a place of worship for God, God's desire that the place that they make for the worship of God be simple and natural. God did not want them building ornate places of worship.

Why? Because when you come into an ornate place of worship your mind is drawn to the ornateness of the place and you begin to glory in its architecture or in the fine carvings or in the beauty of the place itself.

But God wants you when you come to worship Him not to be distracted to stand in awe of gorgeous architecture or whatever but that your place of worship be just a simple place that does not attract attention to itself but allows you to give your full attention unto the Lord to worship Him. And thus stones, don't carve them, don't cut them off, don't smooth them out, just whole stones to make the altar.

Then on Mount Ebal to place these stones in a pile to plaster the pile and write upon this plaster the law of God there on Mount Ebal. And then to bring burnt offerings and peace offerings. Now if you remember your lessons out of Leviticus you'll remember that the burnt offerings were the offerings of consecration.

It is the symbolizing of the consecrating of my life to God. The peace offerings were the offerings of communion, my desire to fellowship with God and to commune with God. And so the two offerings, the burnt offering that is the consecration and communion with God.

Now up on top of Mount Gerizim certain of the tribes were to stand and to pronounce the blessings upon the people. And on Mount Ebal other tribes were to stand and pronounce the curses. And so on Mount Gerizim verse 12, to bless the people, the tribe of Simeon, Levi, Judith, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin.

On Mount Ebal to curse the people, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. And the Levites shall speak and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice. Now here's the picture when you are in the valley of Shechem.

You have on your left hand side Mount Gerizim. It rises probably 2,000 feet above the valley. And on the right hand side you have Mount Ebal rising about 2,000 feet above the valley.

So here you have the valley of the area of Shechem with these two mountains on either side. So the vast multitude of Israel standing in this valley. And up on the top of Mount Gerizim these men from these tribes that we read off are calling out the blessings of God that shall come upon you for obedience.

On the other Mount Ebal as you're in the valley you're hearing these guys cry the curses for those that disobey the laws of God. And so it must have been a very awesome kind of an experience. One that would really implant itself quite deeply in your mind as you realize the blessings and the cursings.

As God said, I've set before you today a blessing and a curse. A blessing if you obey, a curse if you disobey. So these are the curses that were then pronounced.

Cursed is the man that makes any graven or molten image an abomination unto the Lord. The work of the hands of the craftsman and puts it in a secret place. And all of the congregation shall say Amen.

So after each one of these curses they'd have to cry out, so be it. Just sort of accepting, you know, all right, judgment, so be it. And so the various curses that were cried out from this area and the people acknowledging the rightness of the curses as you go through the remainder of chapter 27.

And as you come into chapter 28, it shall come to pass. If thou shalt hearken diligently, you see the conditions. If you hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe and to do all His commandments.

You get this over and over again because this was the condition of the covenant whereby they could have this land and dwell there. This was the condition of God's blessings. It was the obedience to the commandments of God.

That God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee. If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.

Blessed shalt thou be in the city and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy ground and the fruit of thy cattle and the increase of your cows, your flocks, your sheep. Blessed will be your basket and store.

You'll be blessed when you come in. You'll be blessed when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies to rise up against thee to be smitten before your face.

And they shall come out against thee one way and flee from thee seven ways. The Lord will command the blessings upon thee in your storehouses and in all that you set your hand to do. The Lord will bless your land which He gives to you and He shall establish thee as a holy people unto Himself.

And the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord will make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, the fruit of thy cattle. The Lord shall open unto thee His good treasure, the heaven to give rain unto the land in His season.

Thou shalt lend to many nations, not borrow. The Lord shall make thee the head, not the tail. If you hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, to observe them and to do them and shall not go aside from keeping these commandments.

Now again, all of the blessings that God is promising to them, conditioned upon their keeping the commandments of God and doing them. But if it shall come to pass, if you do not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe the commandments and statutes and so forth, then cursed shalt thou be in the city and in the field. Cursed will be your basket and your store.

Cursed will be the fruit of your body, the fruit of the land, the increase of the cows and the flocks and sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when you come in and cursed when you go out. The Lord will make the pestilence to cleave unto you.

The Lord will smite you with consumption and the heaven that is over you shall be brass and the earth shall be like iron, the drought. The Lord shall cause thee, verse 25, to be smitten before thine enemies and thou shalt go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. Thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

And your carcass will be meat for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth and no man shall fray them away. The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt and with the emrods and the scab and with the itch. Therefore thou cannot be healed.

And the Lord will smite thee with madness and blindness and astonishment and heart. And thou shalt grope at noonday and God goes on to tell to them the curses that will come upon them if they turn away from God and begin to worship and serve other gods, the gods of the land. This is what is going to happen.

Now we are dealing with a basic law of God and it is important that we recognize this. The law of God is expressed in another verse of Scripture which declares righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. If a nation will establish itself as a righteous nation, if a nation will place God at the center of its national life, recognizing and acknowledging God, that nation shall be blessed of God abundantly.

That was exactly what our founding fathers had in mind when they established this, the United States of America. They had in their mind to establish a nation that would guarantee the religious freedoms. A nation though that honored God in the heart and in the life of the nation itself.

And it was their purpose to keep the people aware of the dependency upon God. And because our nation was thus established, our nation was greatly blessed of God. America, America, God shed his grace on thee.

And our nation grew strong and powerful among the nations of the earth. And we today living in this nation are enjoying the benefits that have come to this nation because of the wisdom of the founding fathers in founding a nation with God at the heart and the center. Even imprinting on the coins in God we trust.

Trying to bring to the people a national consciousness of the need of God and the centrality of God in the national life. And the nation did become strong. The nation did become prosperous.

But now in our prosperity we have men in the Supreme Court and throughout our whole governmental processes who do not believe that God should be a part of the nation. These men are men who are controlled by the humanistic philosophies whose God is materialism. And because they are humanists, they have sought to put God out of the national consciousness.

These humanists have not only controlled our government, they control the major mass media in the United States. You cannot buy time on the major networks for religious broadcasting because they're controlled by the humanists. They don't want anything that would cause people to begin to have again a national consciousness of God.

They have begun their rulings whereby they have ruled prayer out of the public school, the Bible out of the public school, and now the celebration of Christmas out of the public schools, except in only a secular sense. I have on my desk a paper from the superintendent of one of our local school systems here to all of the teachers telling them that they are to delete any story of Christmas that deals with Mary and the Christ child. That they are not to sing any carols that have anything to do about a baby being born in Bethlehem or anything about Jesus Christ.

And it tells how that they must be subtle in these things so that they don't get a big backwash. And it goes ahead and instructs them on their Christmas programs how to do it so as not to give offense to the Christians because Christ has been totally deleted out of it. But it goes ahead and it quotes from certain Supreme Court edicts that make it necessary to rule Christmas carols in Christ even out of Christmas.

And they are even changing the name and no longer calling it your Christmas vacation because they don't even want the word Christmas because it has Christ in it. I don't think that I need to tell you that our nation is in a very precarious position tonight. As a strong, great, powerful nation, we are deteriorating very rapidly.

For the very things that made us strong, we are now ignoring and trying to rule out of our national life. And even as God blessed our nation because we were willing to put God at the center of our national life, even as we have chosen now to rule God out of our national life, we are beginning to experience the curses and they are going to increase. Our nation is rapidly going downhill.

We are faced with insurmountable kind of problems. They're talking about gas rationing right after the first of the year. Kuwait is talking about cutting off 25% of its oil production, making our oil needs even more

critical.

We already know that they can't do anything about the economy, that it's in a royal mess. And we see the deterioration of this nation because we have sought by legislature and by the court rulings to rule God out of our national life. Our nation was strong because it was founded upon godly principles.

Our nation is becoming weak as we seek to rule God out. Now the whole sad thing about this is that here we are enjoying the benefits of our forefathers who had enough foresight to make the constitution and all so that it guaranteed the religious freedoms and it gave us the right for these things. You see, according to the ruling of the Supreme Court, the students who are gays have a right to meet on campus, to have a room furnished for their meetings so that they can advocate and discuss the gay life and pass out literature and so forth, advocating that life.

They have a court ruling, a Supreme Court ruling that gives them that privilege. However, that same Supreme Court ruled that the children do not have a right to meet together in a public school building and study or talk about the Bible even if they meet at their own choice. And yet we have still printed on our coins, in God we trust, how hypocritical can a nation be? Whenever there is a national emergency, the president says pray as long as you're not in a school building.

Now there's just a basic principle involved. When a nation will follow God, that nation will be blessed. When a nation turns from God, that nation is going to be cursed.

I am praying that God will bring to us a national revival. I think that that is the only hope for this nation, is a real revival that will cause the people to turn back to God and really elect legislators, presidents that will appoint Supreme Court and court positions not to lesbians and homosexuals and all like our governor in the state of California, but to men who have a consciousness of God, who fear God, who realize that they are not the final judge, but one day they are going to stand before the judge to give an account of themselves. And men who have a sense of accountability.

If a man doesn't believe in God, he has no sense of accountability. He becomes the authority within himself. Whenever a man becomes authority within himself, you have anarchy.

And you have anarchy even within the court system as they become authorities within themselves to determine what the law says. And if a man has no fear of God within his heart, how can you hope to have righteous judgments? Oh, may God help us as Christians to get up off our couches and to become active in the sponsoring of godly men for public office. I feel that we have an obligation to do so.

Or else, we have no right to sit back and cry when the whole thing goes down the tubes. So God pronounces the curses that are going to come. And he goes on, verse 37, he tells them that they shall become, they'll be driven into other nations, and they'll become an astonishment, a proverb, a byword among all the nations wherever the Lord leads you.

Verse 37. Now, it is interesting that that has happened to the Jew. In being driven into the other nations, they became a curse, a byword.

And it seems like they were hated sometimes even without cause by people. There are people today who have very strong anti-Semitic feelings. And the term Jew became almost a dirty term, a byword, a curse, because they disobeyed the commandments of God.

Verse 45, moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee. Man, if this isn't enough, I mean, God goes on and on and on. And shall pursue thee and overtake thee till you are destroyed because you have not hearkened to the voice of the Lord your God to keep his commandments and statutes which he commanded thee.

And because you did not serve the Lord, verse 47, with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things. Oh, what a sad, tragic thing. When God has given us so much that we would murmur and complain.

God has blessed us so much, we murmur because the new hundred dollar boots we bought are stiff and we have to break them in. But how about those poor Cambodians that don't even have shoes? The lepers that don't even have feet? I mean, we have so much to be thankful for. And we should be serving God with joyfulness and gladness of heart.

God loves a happy disposition. God wants you to serve him joyfully, not gripingly. Again, if you can't serve God without griping, then don't serve God.

If you can't give to God without complaining, then don't give to God. It's an insult to God for you to complain about what you've given to him. What a horrible insult to God.

So if you can't give it joyfully, don't give it. Don't insult God by complaining about what you've given or what you've done or had to do for him. Better not to do it.

That's why we don't ask you to do things around here at Calvary. We don't want any griping service to God. Whatever you do for God, you do it with your heart and do it joyfully or don't do it.

That's why we wait for people to come to us to ask how they can serve the Lord before we ever give them any jobs. We never go around soliciting people to fill a job here at Calvary because we don't want you to feel pressured. Oh, here comes Romain again.

He's going to get on to me for that job. Oh, what shall I tell him this time? No way, no way. We'll never approach you for any service unto the Lord.

That's something that's going to have to come from your own heart, your own desire. Whatever you do for God, just do it joyfully with gladness of heart and God accepts it, receives it, and appreciates it. No other way is God interested in anything you might have for Him.

Now because you did not serve the Lord your God with the joyfulness, you're going to then serve your enemies in hunger and thirst and nakedness and in want of things, and your enemies will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. And the Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as an eagle flies, a nation whose tongue you have not understood, which is a reference to the Roman Empire, a nation of fierce countenance which will not regard the person of the old nor show favor to the young. And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle and the fruit of your land and all.

He shall besiege thee and all thy gates. And in verse 53, God said you're going to even eat the fruit of your own body. In other words, you'll be so hungry you'll eat your own children.

And this horrible curse did come to pass in the history of these people as they were driven by hunger to eating their own children. One of the times is recorded in 2 Kings chapter 6. Verse 58, if thou will not

observe to do all of the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear the glorious and fearful name of Jehovah thy God, then the Lord will make thy plagues awesome, plague your seed and give you a sore sicknesses of long continuance and he'll bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt and you will be left few in number, whereas you were at once as the stars of heaven for multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. You see how obedience is woven into the whole thing.

If you obey, these are your blessings, but because you would not obey because they did not obey and all of the curses. This is the covenant that God established. God says, all right, I'm going to give you this land, I'm going to set this covenant with you.

Obey me, follow me. You'll enjoy it. You'll be blessed.

Disobey me, turn from me and the curses will follow. That is, it's just the covenant by which God gave to them the land. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, verse 64, from one end of the earth even to the other, and there shalt thou serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known.

And you're going to hate life. Life will be very grievous to you. In the morning, you'll say, I wish it were evening.

In the evening, you'll say, I wish it was morning. In chapter 29, God continues with this covenant. These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel.

And Moses called all Israel and said unto them, Ye have seen what the Lord has done before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh and his servants. The great temptations which your eyes have seen, the signs, those great miracles, yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day. For I have led you for forty years in the wilderness, and your clothes are not old, and your shoe is not old upon your foot.

You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink, that you might know that I am the Lord your God. In other words, Moses said, you have seen these things of God, but they have become commonplace. You don't even see them anymore.

Don't you realize after forty years, look at your shoes, they haven't even worn out. Your clothes are still good, and you've not really been able to plant or harvest, and yet God has taken care of your food. And you came to these kings, Sihon and Og, and God gave them into your hand, and you took their land, and God gave it to you for an inheritance.

Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them that ye may prosper in all you do. Their prosperity was tied directly to their keeping and doing the commandments of God. That is the covenant that God established.

Now you stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God, your little ones, your wives, that you should enter into the covenant with the Lord your God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God makes with thee this day, that he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, that he may be unto thee a God, as he has said unto thee, and he has sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God. For you know how that you have dwelt in the land of Egypt, and now you came through the nations that you passed by.

You have seen their abominations, their idols. Some of them were wood, some stone, some silver and gold. Now lest there should be among you a woman, a man, or a family, or a tribe, whose heart is turned away this day from Jehovah our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood, and it come to pass that when he hears the words of the curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, I'll have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.

The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in the book shall come upon him. Now this is a horrible thing when God's word is given and a person in his own heart contradicts the word of God. When God's word says, that thou shalt not escape the wrath of God, and you think in your heart, ha ha, that's not true, I'll escape, or it doesn't apply to me, or whatever.

And it's tragic that people often times do this, when God pronounces a curse, they smile within themselves and they say, no, it won't happen to me. In Hebrews we read, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? There is no escape. God's word shall be fulfilled, don't be deceived.

God is not mocked, and yet there are people who are mocking God. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them that ye may prosper in all that you do. Now, in verse 24, even all the nations shall say, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto the land? What means the heat of this great anger? And they'll say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers which he made.

And so verse 29, the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words, that we may do all the words of the law again, the doing of it.

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