

Message #33

Deuteronomy 27:1-26

Most people are miserable in life. They are not happy and they are not joyful and frankly sometimes they are to blame for their own condition. Now this is not always true, but many times it is true. **The key to happiness and the key to joy in life is having the blessings of God and the key to that is a right focus on the word of God.**

As we come to this part of Deuteronomy, we come to what actually becomes part of the farewell addresses that Moses is giving to God's people. His life was winding down and they were about to cross the Jordan and go into the Promised Land and Moses knew the key to having happiness and blessing was to keep their focus on the written word of God and obey it.

GREAT LEADERS COMMUNICATE THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE KEEPING THEIR FOCUS ON KNOWING AND OBEYING THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD FOR THIS IS THE KEY TO REJOICING IN LIFE.

We all have setbacks and struggles in life. But the key to a joyful life in the big picture of things is to keep our focus on God's word. In part, we may determine our own happiness by the things we do and by the things we don't do. That is what Moses wanted to communicate to the people.

There are three main parts to this:

PART #1 – The written word of God is to be displayed for people to see. **27:1-4, 8**

The leaders, in this case the Elders, had the responsibility to see that they make sure the people are constantly aware of the fact that the written word of God is the most important thing they need in life. They must never lose sight of this.

Verse 1 says that Moses and the elders began by charging the people to know and obey the written word of God.

According to **verse 2**, on the very day they crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land, they were to set up two large stones and coat them in lime. The stones would need to be large to be able to contain a copy of the law. These stones would need to be monumental size. The lime would form some sort of plaster upon which one could write.

There is some discussion over whether or not an entire copy of the entire law was to be written on these stones or just the essence of the blessings and cursing commandments Moses will give here. Either way, the two stones would stand out and would be seen by God's people.

According to **verse 3**, they were to write on those stones all the words of the law.

According to **verse 4**, the place where they were to do this was Mount Ebal.

There were two mountains that Moses referred to earlier in Deuteronomy 11:29. One was Mount Gerizim and the other was Mount Ebal. Mount Gerizim represented the potential for walking in a direction that would be blessed by God. Mount Ebal represented the potential of walking in a direction that would be cursed by God.

By setting the stones here, it would say to the people obey the word of God, and you want to obey God's word so don't move in a direction that will cause God to curse you.

PART #2 – The altar of God is to be built for the people to sacrifice. **27:5-7**

Moses said the people were to build an altar out of stones upon which no iron tool had ever been used. These stones were not to have been altered by humans in any way. This altar was to be dedicated to God.

The only way into a relationship with God is via a sacrifice on the altar. So even though you have the word of God and even though obedience can lead to a blessed life, the sacrifice is still needed to have a relationship with God. It starts there.

Once this was completed, then fellowship offerings could be made and God's people could go forward having peace in their relationship with God.

God wanted the nation Israel to realize that the only way they could approach God was via sacrifice. Being in a right relationship with God and having fellowship with God is the key to joy.

PART #3 – The people are to listen to the word of God and obey it. **27:9-26**

After Moses had given teaching concerning the location and physical displays of the word of God and the altar, God gives them serious instruction through Moses and the Levitical priests.

Instruction #1 - Be silent and listen. **27:9**

God's people need to see this, hear this and learn this. They need to learn to gather and be silent and quietly listen to the word of God.

We cannot help but be reminded of the words of James, who said, "everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19).

Instruction #2 - You are a people who have become a people for the LORD your God. **27:9b**

God's people need to realize they are God's people. Notice the text says they became God's people "today." Frankly, they had been God's people for years, but this was a very special day when they would cross the Jordan and have this ceremony. It would be a very wonderful moment. They became the blessed people of God in the Promised Land.

Instruction #3 - You are to obey the commandments and statutes of God. **27:10**

God wants His people obeying Him and clearly He connects that with obeying His word. He does not want them focused on obeying man-made religious stuff. Now I want to point out that the people were not only responsible to obey the commandments, but also the statutes.

That word “statutes” (huqqim) refers to all of the written laws and ordinances. So this is not just speaking of ten commandments.

Instruction #4 - You are to cross the river and divide into two groups on two mountains.
27:12-13

This will illustrate that you may go one of two ways in your relationship with God. You may move toward blessings (Mount Gerizim) or you may move toward cursing (Mount Ebal).

Each of these mountains stood about 3,000 feet tall. Ebal was on the north side of the valley and Gerizim was on the south side.

On Mount Gerizim were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. On the Mount Ebal side were Reubein, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali.

This illustration would indicate that God’s people may walk in one of two directions in life. They may walk in the way of blessings or they may walk in the way of cursings.

Instruction #5 - You are to listen to the Levites and agree with them about the cursed things.
27:14-26

God starts with a list of things that lead to His cursing. According to **verse 14**, the Levites were to loudly communicate these things to God’s people. These are things God’s people don’t want to do. There were twelve specific cursed things that the people were to avoid.

As the things were read, they were to say AMEN after each one:

(Cursed Action #1) - One is cursed who designs and makes an idol. **27:15**

If you were a person who actually made an idol, you would be cursed by God. Idolatry is something the first two of the famous Ten Commandments forbid. So if you were one who carved out some idol or designed it and formed it, it was an abomination to God. Even if someone did this secretly, God would see it, God would know it and God would curse it.

(Cursed Action #2) - One is cursed who dishonors his father or mother. **27:16**

The idea of dishonoring a father or mother is not so much disobeying them; it is more the idea of making light of them and not giving them the weight they deserve.

The Hebrew word qalah means to treat someone with contempt and to make light of them in a disrespectful way (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 732). The Septuagint specifically uses a Greek word that means to not highly value them or view them in an esteemed way (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 446).

So to disrespect one's parents or to make fun of them is something that will bring the curse of God.

The first cursed action pertains to God. The second cursed action pertains to parents. The third cursed action pertains to neighbors.

(Cursed Action #3) - One is cursed who moves a neighbor's land boundary. **27:17**

Land property was specifically given by God to a family and if one moved the boundary markers to try and get a little more land for self, it was stealing in the sight of God. Land boundaries needed to be respected. People were to realize God has given us what we have and God has given them what they have.

(Cursed Action #4) - One is cursed who misleads a blind person. **27:18**

One who does something hurtful to a handicapped person will be cursed by God. God wants handicapped people treated respectfully and honorably. Someone who is blind needs help and if someone led them on the wrong road, God would curse that person.

People are blinded today spiritually and they are being led in wrong directions.

(Cursed Action #5) - One is cursed who distorts justice to an alien, orphan and widow. **27:19**

God wanted these people treated justly and fairly. People are to be treated with respect and treated in a just way. The group mentioned here did not have much money and weren't able to get some high priced lawyer to defend them. They were easy prey for misuse and abuse.

More than likely someone who was influential or powerful did something which demanded justice.

(Cursed Action #6) - One is cursed if he has sexual relations with his father's wife. **27:20**

Now the next four cursed things on the list have to do with sexual immorality.

This would forbid incest and it also would forbid relations with a mother or step-mother (Lev. 18:8). Such a sin would cause God to curse one who committed it.

(Cursed Action #7) - One is cursed if he has sexual relations with an animal. **27:21**

Bestiality is an abominable sin. It is significant to note that the grossness of this sin is in a context of immoral activity with a relative.

(Cursed Action #8) - One is cursed if he has sexual relations with his sister. **27:22**

It didn't matter if the sister were of the father or mother, which would be a step-father or step-mother situation, or a half-sister situation; this was evil in the sight of God. Now some interpret this to mean that this is a step-sister who is a "non-blood line sister." However, Leviticus 18:9 covers both situations.

(Cursed Action #9) - One is cursed if he has sexual relations with his mother-in-law. **27:23**

The mother-in-law is literally in Hebrew the wife's mother.

One must wonder how does one reach such a sexually perverted state. **It starts with the mind.**

God's people need to guard their minds and stay clear of immoral thoughts and immoral things because they can spiral downward and lead to one committing horrible cursed things.

(Cursed Action #10) - One is cursed if he strikes his neighbor secretly. **27:24**

The idea of "striking" a neighbor is the idea of killing a neighbor. People commit crimes and do it secretly thinking they get away with it. They do not.

I agree with what Doug MacIntosh said in his commentary, "There is no perfect crime within the covenant community because Yahweh sees everything" (*Deuteronomy*, p. 312).

Those who think they can commit a crime and get away with it are fools. Because no matter who they are or where they are, God sees it and knows it and if they do not deal with the sin they will answer to God.

(Cursed Action #11) - One is cursed who takes a bribe and strikes one innocent. **27:25**

Someone who would hurt one for hire is cursed by God.

(Cursed Action #12) - One is cursed who does not obey the word of God. **27:26**

The antithesis of this is that one will be blessed if they don't do these things.

The more we know the word and the more we apply the word, the happier we will be because we will be blessed by God.

Now the Apostle Paul made it clear that no one may have eternal life by keeping the law. In fact, in Galatians 3:10, Paul quotes this very verse in Deuteronomy 27:26 and says one is cursed who does not do all the things in the law.

So perhaps as we have gone through this part of the Mosaic law, you have seen something that you didn't do or did do. You spotted something that would indicate you are cursed.

Well Jesus Christ came to set us free from the curse of the law. As Paul said in Galatians 3:11, "no one is justified by the Law before God is evident for the just shall live by faith."

Believe on Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.