

Deuteronomy 11:1-17

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“You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. ² “Know this day that I *am* not *speaking* with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, ³ and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land [to deliver His people]; ⁴ and what He did to Egypt’s army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them [because Pharaoh opposed Him]; ⁵ and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place [because Israel failed to live by faith; cf. Ex 32; Num 25; Deut 1:22–45]; ⁶ and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel [because they opposed God’s selection of Moses as their leader; Num 16:1-40]—⁷ but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did. ⁸ “You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that [purpose clause] you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it [cf. Deut 4:40]; ⁹ so that [purpose clause] you may prolong *your* days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ “For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden [i.e., by human effort]. ¹¹ “But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven [i.e., by divine effort], ¹² a land for which the LORD your God cares [i.e., He personally attends]; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it [i.e., He personally watches over it], from the beginning even to the end of the year [to give rain according to its agricultural cycle]. ¹³ “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love [with commitment] the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, ¹⁴ that He will give the rain for your land in its season [cf. Mal 3:10], the early and late rain [September/October & March/April], that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil [cf. Deut 7:13]. ¹⁵ “He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied [God’s logistical grace provision]. ¹⁶ “Beware that your hearts are not deceived [i.e., take in false teaching], and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them [no idolatry]. ¹⁷ “Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you [because of unfaithfulness], and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

Observations:

Moses opens this pericope with a concern for Israel's relationship with God. He does not want them to obey the Lord merely because He's their King, but because they understand His goodness, that He has chosen them for a relationship, purpose, and blessing. For this reason, Moses states, "You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments" (Deut 11:1). To love the Lord was a choice-response to trust and walk with Him. This love would manifest itself by obedience to His will.

God's deliverance from Egypt was personally experienced by some of Moses' audience, as they were part of the younger generation—under twenty—who could personally recall the exodus event (Num 14:29). They knew about God's judgment on Egypt, the Passover event, crossing the Red Sea, destruction of Pharaoh's army, God speaking to them at Mount Sinai, His provision for their needs in the wilderness, and His judgment that fell upon them because of their rebellion. Moses stated:

Know this day that *I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God*—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, ³ and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; ⁴ and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them; ⁵ and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place, ⁶ and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel— ⁷ but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did. (Deut 11:2-7)

Moses' selective recollection of God's blessings and discipline upon the nation were didactic in nature. These events served to reveal God's faithfulness to them. The Lord preferred to bless them (Deut 11:2-5), but being holy, He could not suffer their foolishness and rebellion (Deut 11:6). Those whom Moses addressed had personally witnessed the events he was recalling (Deut 11:7), and these could share their experiences with the next generation. In what follows, Moses shifts his language from recalling God's past actions of blessing and judgment to exhortation and obedience. Israel was to believe that their God who judged Egypt, rescued and cared for them, and judged the unfaithful, could and would lead them into the land of Canaan. But their future blessing or cursing required them to know and obey God's Word.

In order for Israel to receive God’s blessings and avoid His judgments, they would need to learn His Word and obey His directives. Moses wrote, “You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, ⁹ so that you may prolong *your* days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 11:8-9; cf. Deut 4:40). The call for obedience was followed by two purpose clauses: 1) that they would be strong and go in and possess the land (vs. 8), and 2) that they would prolong their days in the land (vs. 9). Jack Deere states:

Moses wanted the people to draw an important conclusion from his brief review of their history (vv. 1–7). Since God had designed Israel’s past experiences to bring about her moral education, it should have been plain to the nation that their experiencing the Lord’s grace or judgment depended on their moral behavior. Therefore, they could prosper in the new land only by observing (obeying) all God’s commands. The strength of the Israelites was directly related to their obedience. So the supernatural ability to conquer enemies stronger than they and the ability to live long in the land (cf. 4:40; 5:16; 6:2; 25:15; 32:47) was ultimately a question of ethics, not military skill.¹

Moses portrayed the land as attractive, as “a land flowing with milk and honey.” Moses had previously described the land of Canaan as consisting of “great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, [and] vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant” (Deut 6:10-11). And in another place described Canaan as “a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper” (Deu 8:7-9). The land of Canaan was move-in-ready for Israel to take, as the Canaanites were under God’s judgment, for they had forfeited the land because of their wickedness (Deut 9:4-5).

Compared to Egypt, Canaan was a special land. Moses stated, “For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden” (Deut 11:10). In Egypt, the cultivation of the land and food production was entirely by human effort. Eugene Merrill comments:

¹ Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 282.

The technique referred to is attested in ancient texts and drawings and still exists in parts of Egypt. It consists of networks of ditches, canals, and holding tanks from and into which river water could be “pumped” by means of a paddlewheel-like device called a *shadūf* in Arabic. This was powered by pedals or similar systems so that one could indeed say that the irrigation was done by foot.²

In contrast to the land of Egypt, God was bringing His people into a land that He personally cared for. Moses stated, “But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven,¹² a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year” (Deut 11:11-12). The blessing was that Israel would not have to rely on human effort to make sure the land was watered, for God Himself would provide rain from heaven. And unlike the pagan gods who slept and went on trips, Yahweh would not sleep or go away, so His eyes were always fixed on the land and He would ensure the rain from the beginning to the end of the year.

Being in a contractual relationship with God, Israel’s blessing or cursing depended on obedience to Him. God had already shown Himself to be loving, faithful, powerful, and one who desired their best. Israel could expect God to keep His word and send them rain for their crops at the proper times. The provision of rain did not depend on them working the land—like they did in Egypt—but on their obedience to knowing and walking in God’s will. To be clear, God was not buying their obedience; rather, He was promising to reward them for faithful service.

Moses told them, “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul,¹⁴ that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil” (Deut 11:13-14). Obedience was the key to blessing, for if God’s people would commit themselves to His directives, He would send the rain at the proper seasonal times. The people were informed, “He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied” (Deut 11:15; cf. Deut 7:13). Here is another example of God’s logistical grace, as He will provide for all their needs.

But Israel could forfeit their blessings if they turned away from the Lord and disobeyed Him. Moses warned them, saying, “Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them” (Deut 11:16). God’s people could be deceived by taking in false doctrine. The people who occupied the land, as well

² Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 208.

as the surrounding culture, were pagan through and through. If Israel did not take care to guard their hearts, they could succumb to cultural pressures, which would lead them to turn away from God and worship idols. If Israel did this, Moses warned them, “the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you” (Deut 11:17). The Canaanites worshipped Baal and other fertility deities that promised fruitful seasons. Baal idol worship included sensual ritual sex—at pagan altars and in fields—designed to provoke the deity to send rain. Jack Deere states:

Unless the people of Israel were extremely careful, they could easily be enticed by their pagan neighbors to enter into the sensual worship of these deities. It would simply be a matter of transferring their trust in the LORD for the fertility of their land to one or more of those false gods. And this worship, which was divorced from the realm of ethics and which emphasized ritual sex, was so appealing to human hearts that careless and morally undisciplined Israelites would be drawn into its fatal web.³

The bilateral covenant between God and Israel promised blessing or cursing depending on how they responded to the Lord. If Israel would love God in return and follow His directives, He would give them blessing. However, if they chose not to love the Lord and follow His directives, then blessing was withheld and cursing would follow (Deut 11:26-28).

God has a history of providing tangible blessings for His people; however, as Christians living in the dispensation of the Church Age, we are not promised physical blessings or real estate. Rather, God has chosen to bless us spiritually in Christ (Eph 1:3). Some of these blessings are as follows:

1. We are the special objects of God’s great love (Rom 5:6-10; Eph 2:4-5).
2. We are forgiven all our sins (Eph 1:7; Col 2:13; Heb 10:10-14).
3. We are children of God (John 3:6; Gal 3:26; 1 Pet 1:23; Tit 3:5).
4. We are given eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28; 20:31).
5. We are given the gift of God’s righteousness (Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9)
6. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3).
7. We are made alive together with Christ (Eph 2:5).
8. We are raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6).
9. We are the recipients of His grace (Eph 2:8-9).
10. We are justified before God (Rom 3:24-28; 5:1).

³ Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 282.

11. We have relational peace with God (Rom 5:1).
12. We are given citizenship in heaven (Phil 3:20).
13. We are made ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20).
14. We are transferred from Satan's domain of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13; 1 Thess 2:12; cf. Acts 26:18).
15. We are all saints in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:18-19; 2:19).
16. We are priests to God (Rev 1:6).
17. We are God's elect (Rom 8:29-33; Eph 1:4).
18. We are the recipients of His faithfulness (Heb 13:5; Phil 1:6; 1 Th 5:24).
19. We have been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4, 10-13).
20. We are members of the Church, the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18).
21. We are indwelt and sealed with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 1:13).
22. We have special access to His throne of grace (Heb 4:16).
23. We are guaranteed a new home in heaven (John 14:1-3).
24. We are guaranteed resurrection bodies (1 Cor 15:50-58).
25. We will be glorified in eternity (Rom. 8:18, 30; Col. 3:4).

As Christians, we must grow up and become spiritually mature. This means devoting ourselves to the Lord to learn and live His Word by faith. Obedience means we'll have a proper identity rooted in divine viewpoint, a healthy spiritual self-esteem, and a purposeful walk with the Lord. Failure to grow up means we'll live ignorantly of God's calling and forfeiture of His blessings, both in time and eternity.