

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 15**

**DEUTERONOMY
CHAPTERS 27 & 28**

INTRODUCTION

The Israelites were now at the doorstep to the land which the LORD God had promised them. Soon they would enter the land which was first described as “a good and large land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). The children of Israel were given specific instructions when they entered the land. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 focus on the renewal of the covenant which the LORD God initially made with Abraham. In no uncertain terms, Israel was told that if they kept and did the commandments of God they would be blessed; but if they disobeyed the commandments, terrible things would happen to them. The point of this choice that Israel had to make is that they might fear the glorious and awesome name of the LORD their God, and to walk in His ways (28:58).

. The teachings in these two chapters should motivate us to live the holy and righteous life which God requires of us today, and tomorrow, we will surely reap the spiritual benefits.

OUTLINE

A. The Permanency of God's Word to the Israelites (27:1-13)

1. Moses and the elders told the people to obey God's commandments (27:1).
2. The inscription of God's Law (27:2-4, 8).
 - a) When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they must prepare great stones (2).
 - b) The Law of God given to them through Moses must be inscribed on these stones (3, 8).
 - c) It was to be done in Mount Ebal (4).
3. They must erect an altar unto the LORD in Mount Ebal (27:5-7).
 - a) The altar was to be erected with uncarved whole stones (5, 6).
 - b) Burnt offerings would be made to the LORD on this altar (7).
4. Moses and the priests reminded the people to obey all the commandments of God (27:9-10).
5. The ceremony on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (27:11-13).
 - a) The charge given by Moses (11).
 - b) On Mount Gerizim the pronouncement of blessings by six tribes (12).
 - c) On Mount Ebal the pronouncement of curses by the other six tribes (13).

B. The Twelve Curses (27:14- 26)

1. The responsibility of the declaring of the curses fell on the Levites (27:14).
2. The twelve curses upon the people for the violation of the commandments of God (27:15-26).
 - a) Making graven image (15).
 - b) Dishonouring parents (16).
 - c) Robbing his neighbours' land (17).
 - d) Making the blind to wander out of the way (18).
 - e) Perverting justice to the poor and needy (19).
 - f) Committing sexual intercourse with his father's wife (20).
 - g) Committing sexual intercourse with an animal (21).
 - h) Committing incest (22).
 - i) Committing sexual intercourse with his mother-in-law (23).
 - j) Injuring his neighbour secretly (24).
 - k) Getting paid for killing a person (25).
 - l) Not saying "Amen" to these laws (26).

C. Blessings Attached to Obedience to God (28:1-14)

1. Israel would be a great nation above all nations of the earth if she obeyed God (28:1, 14).
2. Israel would be blessed with the following blessings (28:2-14).
 - a) In the city and the countryside (3).

- b) Physical and material, herds and flocks, basket and kneading trough (4-5).
- c) Coming in and going out (6).
- d) Victory over the enemies (7).
- e) Storehouses and work (8).
- f) A holy people belonging to the LORD, and the nations fear Israel (9-10).
- g) Abundance of blessings (11-12).
- h) Israel would be above all nations (13).

D. Curses Applied to Disobedience to God (28:15-68)

1. Israel would be cursed if she disobeyed God (28:15).
2. The curses that follow (28:16-68).
 - a) In the city and the countryside (16).
 - b) Their basket and barns (17).
 - c) The physical and material, and herds and flocks (18).
 - d) Their coming and going out (19).
 - e) Failure and destruction in all their works (20).
 - f) Affliction of pestilence and sickness (21-22).
 - g) The heaven and the earth would be hard (23-24).
 - h) Defeated and devastated by the enemies (25-37).
 - i) Labour and toil would be in vain (38-40).
 - j) Children taken into captivity (41).
 - k) Locust would destroy their crops (42).

- l) The foreigner would be over them (43-44).
- m) These curses a sign of their disobedience (45-47).
- n) They would be delivered to the rule of a hostile nation (48-57).
- o) If they still disobeyed God, they would be afflicted with plagues and diseases (58-61).
- p) Their population would be decimated and dispersed (62-68).

COMMENTARY

The Permanency of the Word of God

Moses and the elders reminded the children of Israel to keep the commandments of God “this day”. In order to enhance their obedience, Moses and the elders ordered the children of Israel to do four important things when they entered the land. The first thing they must do was to go to Mt Ebal (in central Canaan, about forty miles north west of Jerusalem) and erect a *tower of stones* and plaster it. Then they were to write on the plaster all the words of the law. The next thing they ought to do was to build *an altar*. In building the altar, they were to use whole stones. They were forbidden to do any work of carving of the stones, which the Canaanites did. Thirdly, having built the altar, they should offer *burnt offerings* unto the LORD their God upon the altar, and also *peace offerings*, and should eat there and rejoice before the LORD their God. And finally, on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal and between these two mountains

where they would perform all the above things, they would divide themselves into two groups. One group comprised the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin, standing on the slopes of Mount Gerizim from which they would pronounce the blessings of God, and the other group, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali, pronounced the curses.

There are many rich spiritual lessons which we can learn from these ceremonies which Moses and the elders commanded them to do. We observe that in this address to the children of Israel, Moses did it with the elders, and later, he did it with the Levite priests. Previously, Moses alone addressed the people. The significance of this change is that Moses was soon to pass from the scene; he was not allowed to enter the land. Therefore the responsibility of ensuring that the people keep the commandments of God which they declared “this day” in the future when they entered the land rested on the elders and priests. This teaches us about succession of leadership in the church. It is important that the pastor or the leadership of a church ensures a proper “passing of the baton”, so that the faithful witness of the Word of God in the church may continue steadfastly. It is irresponsible and unscriptural for any pastor to hold on to the office till the day he passes away without ensuring a proper hand-over.

The inscription of the law on plastered stones which could endure through the years, served as a permanent reminder to the children of Israel of their obligations they had undertaken to obey God.

The ceremony of performing the burnt offerings clearly expressed their total commitment to God and in return God would bless them as they would offer the peace offerings and rejoice in a feast of celebration before the LORD. The altar would surely be in the valley between the two mountains from which the blessings and curses were publicly pronounced. The place in which God chose for them to perform this ceremony is both appropriate and meaningful. The place where the two mountains are is Shechem. Shechem was the place where God made the covenant with Abraham to give the land to him and his descendants (Gen. 12:6-7). This was also the place where Jacob returned with his family (Gen. 33:18); and also the place where Joseph's body was buried (Joshua 24:32). The worship of the LORD God takes top priority before anything else after they have taken possession of the land.

The Blessings & Curses

We are told why a list of blessings is not given in chapter 27, whereas a list of curses is clearly stated. The Levites were given the duty here to speak to the people loud and clear the terrible things that would happen to them if they sinned against God. Twelve potential sins are listed. Several of them relate to the Ten Commandments. The first and foremost sin is the sin of idolatry. This corresponds with the First and Second Commandment—cursed be anyone who makes an idol and worships it *in secret*. Worship of God and total submission to His lordship is paramount in the life of the people of Israel; for that matter too, the life of a Christian. Unless

this is resolved in the heart and soul of every child of God, obedience to all the commandments of God will be questionable. The second curse relates to the dishonouring of parents. This corresponds with the Fifth Commandment. God places a high premium on proper and healthy family relationships. The family is an important entity of any nation. If family ties and relationships are not upheld, especially where respect and honour of parents are strictly maintained, the family breaks down, and consequently the nation is weakened. Changing of a neighbour's landmark in order to increase one's own land is nothing short of stealing. This is breaking the Eighth Commandment. The next curse would fall on those who exploit and abuse the people who have disabilities and who are weak and vulnerable—the blind, the foreigner, orphans and the widows. This is followed by a list of four sexual perversions which are an abomination to God. Next, is the sin of secretly murdering a person or bribing someone to kill an innocent person. This is in breach of the Sixth Commandment. Lastly a curse would be against those who refuse even to acknowledge the sins given here.

A salient feature of these sins is that they are not easily detectable by man. These sins are either done in secret or are private. It does tell us one thing though, that while the offender can escape detection by man, he cannot escape from God. Although the punishment or chastisement might not be immediate or delayed, the day will come when justice will be carried out. There is a day of accountability for everyone. The wages of sin is

death. No one can escape that, though it might be delayed at the present moment. We also observe that at the end of each pronouncement of the curses, the people responded with an "Amen". The word "amen" means "truly", "verily" or in modern idiom "so be it". In other words, the people agreed that if they were to commit these sins, these curses would befall them.

Chapter 28 is a very long chapter. It begins with the list of blessings God promised to pour upon Israel if the people kept and did all His commandments. The blessing of God extended to every area of the life of the nation. Their cities and countryside, the people themselves, the land they worked, their cattle and sheep, their barns and storehouses, and their travelling, God would bless them if they obeyed Him. The greatest hindrance to their peace and prosperity would be their enemies. God would ensure that their enemies would be destroyed. God would command blessings upon Israel. He would establish Israel as His treasured possession provided they obey Him and walk in all His ways. The other nations would view Israel with respect when they see her prosperity, and her power to provide assistance to the other nations. Israel would become a prince of all the nations. God repeatedly reminded them of the need to hear His voice and obey His commandments. Obedience to the LORD their God brings many blessings. The blessings take up only 14 verses of this lengthy chapter of 68 verses while 54 verses are allotted to curses if Israel disobeyed God.

This section on curses can be divided into three sections. In the

first section, the children of Israel when they disobeyed God would experience the reverse of the blessings pronounced in verses 3-6. Then Israel would be plagued with sicknesses and diseases: Israel would be defeated in battles; Israel would suffer poor harvests, and a decline in their status among the nations. In the second section, because they chose not to serve the LORD their God and obey Him, God would send nations against them from afar, overpowered them and made Israel to serve them instead. In the process, Israel would suffer terribly the consequences of horrors of their cities being besieged by the enemies (vv.52-57). And if Israel still would "not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book" and demonstrate their fear of the glorious and awesome name of the LORD their God (v.58), God would inflict upon His people the plagues of Egypt, and their population would be decimated. They would be scattered throughout the earth among all nations (64). They would suffer so much that they would fear the coming of the day and the night (vv. 66, 67). This last section has a predictive element. Looking back, these judgements on Israel were fulfilled. In 722 B.C. the Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel, destroying it and many were taken away from the land. In 586 B.C. the Babylonians conquered Israel and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in the south. Many were taken away to Babylon, among whom was the prophet Daniel, then a very young man. In A.D. 70 the Roman General Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple and about one thousand Jewish soldiers who

staged a last stand at Masada killed themselves when they knew they had no hope. The Jews were scattered throughout the earth. Through the centuries, the land of Israel was overrun by Gentile nations. In World War II, a systematic killing of the Jews was carried out by Hitler. Six million Jews died in the concentration camps and gas chambers in Europe. It was not until May 14, 1948 that Israel regained the Promised Land and the Israelites were allowed to return to the land which God had promised them.

Is it not strange that in these two chapters only 14 verses in Chapter 28 refer to the blessings of God if the children of Israel obey while 13 verses in Chapter 27 and 54 verses in Chapter 28, giving a total of 67 verses, allude to curses if the children of Israel disobey God. It seems to impress on us that the possibility of Israel disobeying God is more likely, hence the greater emphasis on the curses. Israel's history has testified to that. How many times had Israel murmured, grumbled and disobeyed God in their sojourning in the wilderness of Sinai! That should be a sobering message to us today for we are not far different from the children of Israel. God will chastise His children when they stray and disobey Him. God cannot be mocked, His Word is true.

The theological significance is that no man can be saved by the law. The law is given so that Israel and others will know the consequences of sin—the wages of sin is death. When the pronouncement of the curses were made on Mount Ebal, Israel stood condemned. But the burnt offerings performed on the altar which God

commanded them to erect was the way of redemption for them, and the restoration of communion and fellowship with Him. That foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ who offered Himself as a propitiation for sins and the sins of the world, so that we can be reconciled to God and we, His children, can call Him "Abba" ("Father").

SUMMARY

These two chapters reveal to us a holy, righteous and consuming God. At the same time it also reveals that God is gracious and merciful. The wages of sin is death and no one can escape His judgement; but God Himself also provides the deliverance from the condemnation of sin. He gave His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the burnt offering, once and for all, that whosoever will believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

As Christians, who have been saved and bought by the blood of Christ, we ought to keep and do His commandments. We must constantly live in the knowledge that God is with us, and that we cannot hide ourselves from him in our thoughts, speech and actions. Let us love and fear the Lord our God, walking in all His ways and glorifying Him. AMEN.

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 27:1-13;
Joshua 8:30-35

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 27:14-
26; Galatians 3:10-14; Romans
3:20

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 28:1-
14; Ephesians 1:3-6

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 28:15-
46; James 2:10-11; Galatians 2:20-
21

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 28:47-68;
Amos 3:2; Luke 12:48

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was Israel commanded to
do after passing over Jordan?

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2. What one unusual element is
seen regarding Moses'
addresses to the Israelites?
What particular significance
does it have?

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3. "True religion remembers the
past and hopes for the future,
but all must be of relevance to
the present" (M. Goldsmith).
How is this shown in this
Scripture portion? How does it
apply to us today?

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4. How do you describe these sins
or wrongful acts?

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5. What is a common feature of
the offences mentioned here?

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6. What is a common feature of the offences mentioned here?

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7. In spite of this fact (the common feature), the offender could not escape the curses. What important truth does it teach us?

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8. What is the foundation for God's blessing?

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9. What seven areas of her life would Israel be blessed (vv.3-6)?

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10. What would God do to see that Israel is blessed?

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11. What is God's purpose in blessing Israel?

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12. Compare verses 1-6 and verses 15-19 of this chapter. What do you observe?

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13. What areas of life in Israel are under the curse in this section of the chapter?

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14. Who would be the agent of judgement in verses 47-57? Why would God use a Gentile nation to punish His people?

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15. What meaning does this chapter give to the "glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD?"

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16. Does this Chapter give a preview of what did happen to Israel? How?

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