

**CHOOSE LIFE!**

Deuteronomy 26:16-30:20  
Key Verse 30:19,20

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“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Let's begin by recapping what we have been learning in our Deuteronomy series. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' testamental farewell message for the next generation who would enter the Promised Land before his death. The word “Deuteronomy” means “repetition of the law” or “reemphasis,” and if literally translated, “earnest, repeated teaching (urge)”. Ultimately Deuteronomy is God's earnest appeal through Moses that the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and even the 3<sup>rd</sup> and future generations love God with all their hearts!

26:16-19 set the stage for the rest of the passage, so it consists of the introduction to this message.

- Let us first read verse 16: “The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.” (26:16) This is the admonition from God.
- Then there are mutual declarations between the people and the LORD.
- Let us read verse 17: “You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him.” This is the declaration of the people.
- Verses 18-19 contain the LORD's declaration. Let's read these verses together: “And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.”

At this standpoint, the people had declared obedience to God's laws (Ex 19:8; Ex 24:7), and had even sealed a covenant in blood. And God's declaration in verses 18-19 are a ratification of his promise at Mount Sinai:

Ex 19:5-6a	Deut 26:18-19
“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”	“The LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honour high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.”

Now, as God's treasured possession, his kingdom of priests, and his holy nation, what was their future? This passage is all about the blueprint for the design of their future, as God's people.

So now we are all at GLEF 2019. Who has accepted the key verse, Exodus 19:5,6a? This passage is about our future. What kind of future lies before us? How may we live? May God give us, through this study, listening ears and faithful hearts to choose the life of blessing in God, and to become a source of blessing for others.

This message has 3 subsequent parts:

- 1) Blessings & Curses in the Promised Land (27:1-28:68)

- 2) The Renewal of the Covenant at Moab (29:1-30:20)
- 3) The Offer of life and death (30:11-20)

**1. Blessings & Curses in the Promised Land (27:1-28:68)**

In chapter 27, Moses tells the next generation what they were to do when they entered the Promised Land. If you were founding a country, what would be the first thing you did or built? Perhaps homes, a marketplace, and a court for disputes. What about the Israelites? Let's read 27:2-3a: "When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law..." They were to set up large stones inscribed with the law, and sacrifice burnt and fellowship offerings there. It is like a centre dedication, and also like a constitution. Moses helped the Israelites to begin with claiming the land as God's land. He helped them to found their nation as a people of God's word as their constitution.

Then in verses 9-10, Moses and the priests said to all the people, "Be silent, O Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the LORD your God. Obey the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today." This message of Moses and the priests to the Israelites might be a summary of what messages and lectures here at GLEF are saying! "Be silent, O UBF next gens, and listen! You have now become the people of the LORD your God. Obey the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today." It is much easier to tell people to obey, than to have them actually obey. So Moses did not stop there. He told them what to do next when they had crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land.

Let's read verses 11-13: "On the same day Moses commanded the people: When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphthali." What were they to do?

	<b>Blessings</b>	<b>Curses</b>
Where	Mount Gerizim	Mount Ebal
Who	Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin	Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphthali

Moses helped all the people to open their mouths to speak God's words of blessing and curse. In other words, he helped each person to be a Bible messenger and teacher. In UBF, every person is encouraged to be a Bible testimony-sharer, teacher, and messenger. Every person can be. And in fact, as a matter of spiritual life and death, every person must be. We need to proclaim God's word to obey God's word. I thank God for raising 7 new Bible teachers at this GLEF 2019, for several of whom it is the first time. I thank God for raising many new people as testimony and life-testimony sharers. Some were even raised as first-time messengers and presenters. I believe next year, God wants many new people to open their mouths to speak God's word. And in the time between this year's GLEF and next year's, God will also give you the opportunity to be Bible teachers and messengers. Thank God who claims you as his people. May you be empowered as Bible teachers and preachers, to obey God's word and help others obey God's word!

The Levites were especially to recite a series of 12 curses, after each of which the Israelites were to answer, "Amen!" The curses were violations of God's Laws that were common among other contemporary nations. This week we had 3 Levites proclaim such curses to us. Stefan Elsholz proclaimed, "Cursed is anyone who trusts money or job more than God!" Ester Cho said, "Cursed is anyone who posts on Instagram for self-seeking and human recognition!" Paulina Lee said, "Cursed is anyone who practices homosexuality and adultery!" Do you say "Amen!"? Or, "umm...", "that's too cray." ... "And all the people said, 'Amen!'" To say Amen is

## Moses' Leadership in Deuteronomy, Lecture 3

to commit as God's holy people, distinct from all the people of the world. May God help us to be people who say Amen to God's word of blessing and of curse.

In chapter 28, the bulk of Moses' sermon here, Moses expounds the blessings and curses. In Moses' speech, we see the example of the blessings and curses the Israelite people were to pronounce. I want the left side of the room to be those on Mount Gerizim, and the right side on Mount Ebal. So which does the left pronounce? The blessings. And the right, the curses.

<b>Blessings (28:2-6)</b>	<b>Curses (28:15-19)</b>
"All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out."	"However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out."

And all the people said? "Amen."

God's people have a very unique blueprint for our future. Are you interested in designing your future? There are basically two ways: obedience or disobedience, blessing or curse.

In this passage, curses take up what percentage of the verses? Almost 80%. Why? It is not to scare the Israelites into obedience, but to reveal the truth by which they could diagnose their future malady. Later we will see that it was also prophetic, in that they would later disobey God and suffer. Let's take a closer look at some of the curses. Can all those under 30, read verses 28-29? "The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you." Can all married men read verse 30? "You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit." Can all parents read verses 32 and 41? "Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand... You will have sons and daughters but you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity." Can those who love God read verses 36-37, "The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you." Let's all read verses 65-66, "Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life." Aren't these curses truly terrible?

Why is Moses speaking at such length about blessings, and especially about curses? Moses really wants the Israelites to live a blessed life with God, not a cursed life. Here we learn that a true shepherd and Bible teacher is clear. When is the last time that you taught a next gen friend seriously the blessings and curses of disobedience and obedience? Aren't they God's people? Aren't they doomed to a life of curse when they go astray and disobey God, following the world? Relativism says, "you can design a blessed life yourself. You can decide what is good for you." But God's word is very clear! For God's people, there is a clear path of blessing through obedience, and curse through disobedience.

For God's people, this life of curse is a looming possibility. So, too, for unbelievers. But God's people have a way of blessing also set before them. In the world there is no certain life of total blessing. As Lydia Park said in her testimony, millennials are the best educated generation with the highest standard of living. But it is also the most depressed, suicidal, lonely, and sick generation. How many young people do you know, with "an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart"? How many more young people are suffering, of which you do not yet know?

For example, I have two friends who are highly accomplished, beautiful women from wealthy families. Actually, I was initially attracted to them because they seemed full of life, cool, and even perfect. But one suffers from chronic depression, the fear of getting fat, and the anxiety of human rejection and criticism. And the other suffers from the fear of death, guilt, and anxiety about the future. Where can anyone find a blessed life?

Thanks be to God that he made a way for all his people to be blessed people in him. Before the way of blessing in God was blocked to me. I lived a self-centered life. My will was only submissive to my ego, and I had no word of God ruling me. But I experienced that even though I did what I wanted, I had no peace and no joy. I lived a relationshipless and self-imprisoned life. Eventually I became anorexic and wouldn't have cared if I died. But God began a relationship with me and restored his Lordship over my life, and me as his treasured possession through Genesis 1:31. God set me on the path of blessing, and even established a house church on the basis of his promise in Mt 6:33. Who can be sure about anything? Those who are obedient to one word of God can be sure about God's blessing. I can be sure about God's blessing for our house church through Mt 6:33. That's the blessing of a house church. May God help each of us to experience God's great blessing through obeying one word of God. May God help us to grow as shepherds and clear Bible teachers for the young people who are deceived by relativism.

## 2. The Renewal of the Covenant at Moab (29:1-30:20)

Let's read 29:1-2, "These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb." In chapters 29-30, Moses tells all the Israelites additional terms to the covenant God made with them at Sinai. First, in verses 2-8, he reminds them of God's miraculous signs against Pharaoh and Egypt, and his Providence throughout the 40 years in the desert, and God's victory for them against Sihon and Og. Let's read verse 4: "But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear." What was the Israelites' signature characteristic? They were stiff-necked people. What should God do with stiff-necked people?

Let's see what God says through Moses. Let's look at verses 9-15, and read verses 9-10a: "Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God..."

God renewed the covenant with them! Let's think about 2 points: the "who" and the "what" of the covenant. With whom?: Look in verses 9-15.

- Leaders
- Chief men
- elders
- officials
- all the other men of Israel
- children
- wives
- aliens who chop wood and carry water
- **and...also with those who are not here today!**

Here God uniquely mentioned specifically with whom he wanted to make the covenant. Not generally "the Israelite people", but each people group is mentioned, even specifically women and children. God even makes a covenant with the aliens who were their labour force (which would later on be the Gibeonites who deceived them, Jos 9:21). God even makes a covenant

with those who were not yet his people. Let's read verses 14 and 15: "I am making this covenant with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today." Who might this be? Were you there that day? God includes in this covenant those who were not yet his people, including Gentiles and future generations because he wants to make them his people!

"What covenant": Let's read verses 12,13: "You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." God renewed his covenant, making the stiff-necked people his people, and himself their God!

In fact, when we read further on to the end of chapter 29 to chapter 30:10, we see that God knew they would turn away from him again. God knew that among them would be men and women who would hear his words and think in his heart, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." And God's wrath and anger would burn against the whole land. Let's read verses 24-25, "All the nations will ask: 'Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?'" And the answer will be: 'It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt.'

How could God renew his covenant with his stiff-necked people, who would abandon his covenant, at Moab? He added a term to the covenant. Let's read 30:2-3, "and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you." This is the new part of the covenant: God adds a term for repentance! Those who return to him he would restore. Not only that, let's read verse 6: "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live." The new covenant is the covenant of our hearts in Jesus' blood and the Holy Spirit. (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26,27; Lk 22:20; Heb 8:10-12; 10:15-15) "The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' Then he adds: 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin." (Heb 10:15-18)

The living God makes a covenant with sinners like you and like me in the blood of Jesus. When I consider my marriage covenant I catch a glimpse of God's covenant grace. S. Peter Ryu bears with such a sinner like me with the forgiving love of Jesus. Why? Because God made a covenant with such a selfish, self-righteous, and proud sinner like me, forgiving me in the blood of Jesus. Did you know that God has made a covenant with you, paying fully for the forgiveness of your sins in Jesus' blood? Did you know that in Jesus, you are no longer an orphan, a loner or hopeless? You are now God's treasured possession, kingdom of priests, and holy nation. You are people of God's blessing, to whom God has given his words of life! Amen! May God help each of us to deeply renew his covenant grace and return to him today and every day.

Here we see that Moses was a leader with God's forgiving and patient heart. Once when the Israelites complained against him, Moses had cried out, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant?...I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now..." (Num 11:12,14-15a) But each time he turned to God, Moses experienced God's forgiveness and help. God molded him into a forgiving and patient leader, who made God's covenant with Israel. God wants those who know his forgiveness to grow as leaders who can make covenants in Jesus with sinners. In fact, this is what this generation needs: faithful shepherds who can forgive sheep and bear with them in God's hope and grace. This is what our one-to-one Bible Study relationship should

be like. May God help us to be covenant shepherds who live to extend God's covenant to one person at a time.

### **Third, the offer of life or death (30:11-20)**

So far in the book of Deuteronomy, God has laid before the Israelites his history, his law, and his promise very clearly. The word was not far away, but very near them. (30:11-14) We have been studying God's history on maps, served by Dr. Petrus Chang. Here we have God's map in his words. The future was mapped out very clearly. Now what did Moses do? He set the choice very clearly before the Israelites and challenged them to make a decision.

Let's read together verses 15-20: "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

What about you? Now, on the plains of Wachtberg, at GLEF 2019, God lays before you life and death, blessings and curses. What will you choose? What will your future, when you leave this place look like? I know many of you are busy university students, some are just starting your studies. Many are also working people, whose day from waking to sleeping may seem to revolve around work. Many are also occupied with marriage. What a terrible tragedy it would be, to here accept the identity as God's treasured possession, kingdom of priests, and holy nation, and then choose the way of curse! "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction...This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to your voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life..!" The way of God's blessing for his people is wide open to you. Make a decision about your university selection, graduate school direction, job search, and marriage based on one word of God. After GLEF 2019, there will be a follow-up program to help you continue to study and teach God's word. We want to help you to choose life. All of you have at least one person for whom you can pray and with whom you can share God's word. These practical ways we can choose life and grow in love for and obedience to God. May God help each of us to "choose life" living practically as God's people through obedience to his word. May God help also to be leaders who help other young people to make a decision of life, to love God and to obey one word of God. May each 1:1 and group BS we serve help one person to "choose life".

Let's read the key verses one more time: "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."