

LESSON SIX

THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

In earlier lessons we learned about some of the laws and commands which the Lord gave to the people of Israel. These laws taught the people about the holiness of God, their own sinfulness, and the need for salvation because of their sin. The Commandments did not provide a way for people to earn their salvation, but it did teach them how to live in gratitude and thanksgiving for the salvation which God Himself graciously provided. Though the sacrifices they offered could not by themselves atone for their sins, they pointed forward to the time when Jesus would come and make the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all who put their faith in Him.

The law did much more, however, than teach the people about sin and forgiveness. God told the Israelites that those who sincerely obeyed His commands and did what He told them to do would receive many wonderful blessings in their lives. God knew, of course, that no one would perfectly obey all His laws, but He graciously promised His blessing on those those who sincerely sought to obey Him and do what He commanded. The Old Testament records many of the promises of God in this regard and also gives us many stories of people who were wonderfully blessed when they sincerely sought to do His will.

In this Lesson, therefore, we will focus on God's promises in the Old Testament to those who obeyed Him and the blessings that resulted from it. Though the Israelites frequently disobeyed God and were punished for it, there were also many times when people were richly blessed because they believed what God had promised and did what He commanded.

It was a privilege for the Israelites to have God's laws and they were blessed when they obeyed them. However, since no one perfectly did all that God required and no one lived without sin, every blessing of God to the faithful was always based on His mercy and grace and not on human merits. Once again, the words **“It's all by grace,”** continue to be the prevailing theme.

Note: All the passages listed here are from the OLD TESTAMENT and are blessings which God promised His chosen people, the Israelites. These people lived under the old covenant made with Israel before the coming of Christ. In the New Testament God continues to promise that He will richly bless all those who are “in Christ.” However, the blessings promised in the New Testament do not focus at all on earthly or material blessings. Rather, the focus is on the wonderful spiritual blessings which believers receive in Christ. The New Testament also focuses much more than the Old Testament does on the blessings which believers receive after this life and warns believers about focusing too much on earthly riches. Moreover, Jesus told His followers that many of them would suffer persecution--rather than earthly comforts and material blessings--because of their faith and obedience. We should be very careful, therefore, not to use all these promises given to Old Testament Israel and apply them directly to our situation as New Testament Christians.

GOD CHOSE ISRAEL TO BE HIS PEOPLE BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE AND GRACE

Genesis 12:2-3. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great; and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.”

Deuteronomy 4:37-38. “ **Because He loved your forefathers** and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength to drive out nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance as it is today.”

Deuteronomy 7:7-9. “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all people. But it was **because the Lord loved you** and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God; **keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.**”

Deuteronomy 10:15, 20-21; 11:1. “**The LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants,** above all the nations, as it is today. . . . Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise; he is your God who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. . . . Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.”

GOD WOULD BE GLORIFIED AND HONORED THROUGH THEIR BLESSINGS

Deuteronomy 4:33-35, 37, 39-40. “Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things **so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other.**”

Ezekiel 36:22-23. “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O House of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but **for the sake of my holy name** . . . I will show the holiness of my great name, . . . Then **the nations will know that I am the LORD** . . . when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.”

Ezekiel 36:26-28, 30 37-38. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you . . . And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. .

. . . you will be my people, and I will be your God. . . . I will call for the grain and make it

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plentiful . . . I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field . . . I will make their people as numerous as sheep. . . . So will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. **Then they will know that I am the LORD.**”

Joel 2:26-27. “You will have plenty to eat until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; . . . **Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is none other.**”

GOD REQUIRED OBEDIENCE FROM THE HEART

Deuteronomy 4:29-31. “If . . . you seek the LORD your God, **you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.** When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. For the LORD your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon or destroy or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.”

Deuteronomy 10:12. “And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God **with all your heart and with all your soul,** and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?”

Deuteronomy 11:13. “So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to **serve him with all your heart and with all your soul**—then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.”

GOD PROMISED GREAT BLESSINGS TO HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY OBEYED HIM

Deuteronomy 6:3. “Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, **promised you.**”

Deuteronomy 26:17-19. “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. 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.**”

Deuteronomy 30:15, 16, 20. “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

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LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. . . . For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

GOD PROMISED SPECIAL BLESSINGS TO THE LEADERS WHO OBEYED HIM

Joshua 1:7-8. “Be strong [**Joshua**] and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be **prosperous and successful.**”

1 Chronicles 22:12-13. “May the Lord give you [King **Solomon**] discretion and understanding, when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God. Then **you will have success** if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the LORD gave Moses for Israel.”

2 Chronicles 26:5. “As long as he [King **Uzziah**] sought the LORD, **God gave him success.**”

2 Chronicles 31:21. “In everything that he [King **Hezekiah**] undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so **he prospered.**”

GOD PROMISED SUCCESS IN ALL THINGS TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM

Deuteronomy 28:1-13. “If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 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 land and the young of your livestock Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. . . . The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on **everything you put your hand to.** The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. . . . The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. . . . If you pay attention to the command of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.”

Deuteronomy 29:9. “Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may **prosper in everything** you do.”

GOD PROMISED MATERIAL PROSPERITY TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM

Leviticus 26:3-5. “If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.”

Leviticus 26:9-13. “I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you. You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.”

Deuteronomy 15:4-6. “There should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.”

Deuteronomy 16:15. “For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.”

Malachi 3:10-12. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

GOD PROMISED GOOD HEALTH AND LONG LIFE TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM

Exodus 23:25-26. “Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will **take away sickness** from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will **give you a full life span.**”

Deuteronomy 7:12-15. “If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land—your grain, new wine and oil—the calves of your herds and the

lambs of your flocks in the land that he swore to your forefathers to give you. You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young. The LORD will keep you **free from every disease.**”

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Deuteronomy 11:8-9. “Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may **live long in the land** that the Lord swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

GOD PROMISED VICTORY OVER THEIR ENEMIES TO THOSE WHO OBEYED HIM

Leviticus 26:6-8. “I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. . . . You will pursue your enemies and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will chase a hundred and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.”

Deuteronomy 9:3, 6. “Be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them [the giants]; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you. . . . Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

Deuteronomy 11:22-25. “If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him—then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours:. . . **No man will be able to stand against you.** The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.”

GOD BLESSED THOSE WHO RETURNED TO HIM AFTER BEING PUNISHED

Deuteronomy 30:2-10. “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. . . . He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. . . . Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. . . . if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees . . . and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

GOD'S BLESSING ON HIS PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE PSALMS

Psalms 1:1-3. “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD and

on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”

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Psalm 112:1-8. “Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands. His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. . . . Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.”

Psalm 119, more than any other, recounts the wonderful blessing which comes from observing and meditating on God's law. In almost every one of the 176 verses of this Psalm, there is a positive reference of one kind or another to God's laws or commandments. The law is referred to in many different ways, being called God's word, His laws, His commandments, decrees, precepts, statutes or promise. In this Psalm the law is never seen as something negative or oppressive or burdensome but rather as a source of guidance, delight, and blessing. There are words of warning to those who depart from God's law, but the positive blessings that come from obeying His law clearly predominate.

Here are ten verses from this very special Psalm, focusing on the blessing of having God's law, the joy of observing it, and the desire to understand it more fully and to obey it more faithfully.

Psalm 119:1-2. “Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.”

Psalm 119:11. “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Psalm 119:18. “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”

Psalm 119: 33-34. “Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.”

Psalm 119:47-48, “I delight in your commands because I love them. I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.”

Psalm 119:72. “The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.”

Psalm 119:97. “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”

Psalm 119:105. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Psalm 119:165. “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them

stumble.”

Psalm 119:175. “Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me.”

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

When one reads the hundreds of laws and commands in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, it might seem that God imposed a tremendous burden on His people which would drive them to despair. Who could even remember all those laws! And if someone did remember them all, how could anyone expect to keep all the laws all the time with perfect motives and no failures? Obviously, no one could or did.

But God didn't give people His laws simply to enable them to see their weakness and sinfulness. He also promised to bless those who sincerely desired to love and obey Him—in spite of their repeated failures. To these people God promised innumerable blessings, blessings which would set His people apart from all the other nations of the world, and blessings which also would bring Himself honor and glory.

Throughout Old Testament history, there were many times when the Israelites did receive the blessings God promised. Though they were much more prone to disobey than to obey, God honored and blessed all those who truly delighted in His law and joyfully and freely obeyed Him.

These blessings which the people received from God were always blessings of **grace**, not blessings of merit. Blessings did follow from obedience, but they were always gifts of grace to those who put their trust in their merciful and gracious God and who sincerely sought to do His will. The Israelites had been **chosen by grace**, they were repeatedly **forgiven by grace**, and they were **guided, upheld and blessed by grace**. But only those who loved and obeyed their covenant-keeping God received all the blessings God had graciously promised them.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON SIX

1. Indicate which of the following statements are true and which are false.
 - A. God promised to bless the people who faithfully observed the laws He had given them.
 - B. God expected that most of the people would obey all these laws because He promised to bless those who obeyed them.
 - C. There are many Old Testament stories of people who did obey God's laws and were blessed because of it.
 - D. Those who tried hard to obey God's laws were granted salvation because of their sincere efforts.
2. What promises did God give to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3?

3. According to Deuteronomy 4:37, WHY did God bless the Israelites?

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4. According to Deuteronomy 7:7-9, which of the following statements is correct?

A. God chose the people of Israel as His special people because they were numerous, strong, and faithful.

B. God was gracious to the people of Israel because he loved them and promised to bless them.

C. God waited to bless the people of Israel until He proved their faithfulness to Him.

5. Complete this sentence from Ezekiel 36:22. “This is what the Sovereign LORD says, It is not for your sake, O House of Israel, that I am going to do these things but _____.”

6. What promises did God give His people in Ezekiel 36:26 and 27?

7. In Joel 2:18-26 God gave the people several promises. When God fulfilled these promises, what would be the result? See verse 27.

8. In Deuteronomy 4:29 God promised: “If you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if _____.”

9. According to Deuteronomy 11:13 God promised to bless His people in many wonderful ways if they met certain conditions. What were those conditions?

10. Read Joshua 1:7-8.

A. What command did God give to Joshua?

B. What promise did God give to Joshua?

11. Read 2 Chronicles 21:21.

A. What did Hezekiah do that was pleasing in God's sight?

B. What was the result of doing what he did?

12. What promise did God give to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28:1 if they obeyed Him?

13. How would other nations respond to the Israelites if they obeyed God and God blessed them? See Deuteronomy 28:10.

14. Read Leviticus 26:9. What promises did God give to Israel in this passage?

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15. What promises of God are recorded in Deuteronomy 11:8-9?

16. Complete this sentence from Malachi 3:12. "Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and _____"

17. Read Deuteronomy 9:3 and 6. Indicate which of the following statements is NOT true.

- A. God promised to go before His people like a devouring fire.
- B. God promised to destroy the giants which the Israelites would face.
- C. God promised to give His people a good new land to live in.
- D. God promised all these things because the people had become righteous through their faithfulness and obedience.

18. Fill in the blanks in this statement from Psalm 1. "Blessed is the man who does not _____ in the counsel of the wicked or _____ in the way of sinners or _____ in the sea of mockers. But his delight is in the _____ and on his law he meditates _____ and _____."

19. The Lord promised many blessings to the people of Israel who obeyed him. Were these blessings given to them because they earned them or because of God's grace.

20. Write out two other passages which refer to blessings God promised to give to those who obeyed Him. (Use passages which are not referred to in any of the questions above.)

A.

B.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. In the Old Testament there are many more promises of earthly and material blessings for believers than there are in the New Testament. Do you think believers today should take these Old Testament promises and apply them to their lives today? Please give the reason(s) for your answer.
2. Since the blessings promised to the people of Israel were so many and so wonderful, why do you think the Israelites so frequently disobeyed God and forfeited the blessings they could have had by way of obedience?
3. In general, does it seem to you that Christians today are more obedient than the Israelites were in the Old Testament? Please give the reason(s) for your answer.
4. Psalm 119 extols the great blessing of having all God's laws and commandments. The attitude of the person who wrote this Psalm was obviously very positive while the attitude of many other Old Testament people seemed to be very negative. Why do you think the writer of this psalm was so positive?
5. When you are living in a way that pleases God, do you believe that you will be "blessed" for that? Please explain your answer.

Grace Lesson Six Answers

1. A. True
B. False
C. True
D. False
2. God promised to bless Abraham, make him into a great nation, make his name great, and make him a blessing to others. He also promised to bless those who blessed Abraham and to curse those who cursed him. And he promised that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him.
3. God blessed them because He loved them.
4. B
5. . . . for the sake of my holy name which you have profaned among the nations”
6. God said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you . . . And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”
7. The people would know that God was in Israel and that he was the LORD their God. They would also know that there is no other God and they would never again be ashamed.
8. “ . . . you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.”
9. The Israelites had to faithfully obey the commandments God was giving them—to love the LORD their God and to serve him with all their heart and with all their soul.
10. A. God told Joshua to be strong and very courageous and to obey all the laws which Moses had given him. He must not turn from the law to the right or to the left.

B. If Joshua did this he would be successful wherever he went.
11. A. Hezekiah did what was good and right and faithful before the Lord. He sought to serve the Lord in everything he undertook and lived in obedience to the law and commands of God. He sought his God and worked wholeheartedly.

B. He prospered!
12. The Lord promised to set His people high above all the nations on earth.

13. The nations would see that the Israelites were called by the name of the LORD and would fear them.
14. God would look with favor upon them and make them fruitful and increase in numbers. He would also keep His covenant with them.
15. They would have the strength to go in and take over the land that the Lord was giving them and they would live long in the land.
16. “. . . pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”
17. D
18. walk stand sit the law of the LORD day night
19. These blessings were given to them by the grace of God and not because they earned them. However, God did give these blessings because the Israelites obeyed Him. If they did not obey, they would not receive the blessings.
20. Students will likely choose a variety of relevant passages here.