

Deut 10:12–11:32 What Does the Lord Require of You? Part 2

Every year at the end of a sports season, teams usually evaluate the season and plan for the future. If the team wants to succeed next season, they have to change things. They need to overcome their weaknesses and focus on doing the fundamentals of the sport well.

Israel was not a sports team, but they needed to do the same thing as they faced the prospects of conquering the PL.

In Deut chapters 8-9, Moses had cited a whole list of sins that Israel was guilty of—stubbornness, rebellion, idolatry, independence, and self-righteousness. Their track record for faithfulness was not very good. They had made a lot of mistakes on their journey so far. They had not had a very good season. So Moses is emphasizing the need for their behavior to change if they want to be victorious. In light of their previous failures, he's exhorting them get back to the fundamentals.

Moses asks a question at the beginning of this passage (10:12): “what does the Lord your God require of you?” This is a very profound question that we can apply to ourselves—what does God want of me? What is the key to success? All of us should spend some time thinking about and answering that question—what does God require? This passage tells us what God requires; it gives us the fundamentals of a proper walk with God.

As we read through the passage, we should consider whether we are fulfilling God's requirements. Perhaps we need to get back to these fundamentals of the faith.

What does God require of Israel, and what can we learn from this set of requirements?

- I. God requires genuine, sincere faith and obedience. 10:12-11:1
- II. God requires that we learn from the past. 11:2-7

III. God requires obedience and strength to possess the land. 11:8-15

Based on God's great power and his miraculous deeds in the past, Israel must keep God's command to conquer the PL.

- A. .8 Go in and possess the land. They'll be starting the conquest shortly. They must be strong and obey God's commands if they expect to succeed.
- B. .9 It's a land God promised to the fathers.
- C. .9b It's a land flowing with milk and honey. It's a land of lush vegetation; it's a land of prosperity.
- D. .10 It's not like the land of Egypt.

- 1. Egypt was mostly desert. The only green places were near the Nile River and its tributaries and canals. In Egypt, agriculture depended on irrigation.

“watered it by foot” – probably referring to some method of irrigation. They might carry water by foot from the river to the farm. Maybe some kind of machine for irrigation was operated by foot—perhaps a paddle wheel used to pump water into irrigation ditches. In any case, agriculture in Egypt relied mostly on irrigation from the Nile River by human labor.

- 2. .11 In contrast to Egypt, the PL is watered by rainfall; they had to depend on God rather than on their own efforts. God would send the rain if they obeyed him.
- 3. The point: life would be easier and far more prosperous in the PL if they obeyed God.

App: That's a timeless principle—life is usually easier if we obey God. You enjoy the game more when you play by the rules.

Illus.: I was just thinking the other day about some of the people we know who grew up in Christian families and in a good church, but who have left the faith. Is life going well? Are you enjoying life now, or is life a disaster? What have you gained by leaving God?

- E. .12 It's a land God cares for; his eyes are always on it.

Israel is the center of God's attention. This is the land that God promised to Abraham, and it's the land that God is now giving to Israel.

It's an amazing thing that the land of Israel is still the center of the world's attention. What is it about that little plot of land, about as large as the state of New Jersey—it's rather small, and it's surrounded by larger, powerful nations. The land has been repeatedly overrun by large nations and empires, but it never lost its significance. The Nation of Israel was reconstituted in 1948, after nearly 2000 years of non-existence. When has that ever happened?

Why are we still talking about Israel? See vs. 12—God's eyes are on it.

God still has plans for that piece of property. Some of God's promises to Israel remain to be fulfilled. End times events will be played out in the land of Israel. God's eyes are still on that land.

F. .13-15 Israel has prospects of great prosperity—if they will keep God's commandments.

.14 The autumn ... rains (also called the early rains) come in September–October, and the spring rains are in March–April (cf. Joel 2:23).¹

App: Prosperity is often a result of morality. Israel would be prosperous if they obeyed God's commands.

Any nation can become prosperous if it submits to God's moral standards. Prosperity naturally comes to communities where they don't steal, lie, or covet. Prosperity naturally results when we respect property rights and contracts. Prosperity comes to those who work hard, are honest, and who love their neighbors. The so-called Protestant work ethic stems directly from biblical obligations.

And the opposite is also true. Nations that reject God's moral standards tend not to do well in the long term. Over the years, America has become weak because America is immoral. Keeping God's commands and following biblical principles leads to strength and prosperity. I'm glad when our elected leaders try to move America back towards biblical standards of morality.

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.

Moses is trying to show the benefits of obedience. They'll possess this wonderful land and enjoy all this prosperity if they keep God's commands.

As we've seen repeatedly, obedience leads to blessings. Following God has certain benefits. If we want to enjoy God's blessings, we must obey his word.

IV. God requires sincere loyalty. 11:16-25

Along with all these promises of prosperity comes a warning or a threat. What God gives he can easily take away. God could cut off their prosperity; he could "shut up the heavens" and ruin the agriculture if they fall into idolatry.

A. Avoid idolatry.

1. .16 Take heed to yourselves—be careful about this.
2. Don't be deceived by idolatry. The Israelites seemed to be susceptible to the enticements of idolatry; some things about false worship were attractive/enticing.

Serving other gods is easier than serving the God of Israel. The false gods are easy to please; easy to get along with. It would be easier in some respects to worship other gods. That is a satanic deception.

The Canaanites had a fertility god – Baal. They believed that he was responsible for rain and good crops. Moses warns the people not to be deceived by the claims of the Canaanites. It's not Baal who will give them rain and prosperity; it's God.

App: Many people today are deceived. They think that the false gods of this world can give them what they want. It seems like the false gods are easy to serve. But they are deceived. The costs of serving false gods are very high. The benefits of serving God far outweigh the costs. We must not be deceived by the idols of this world.

Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Joshua—choose whom you will serve...

3. .17 Idolatry will result in destruction; you will perish quickly from the good land.

If they turn from God and fall into idolatry, the Lord's anger will be aroused. Cf. 9:19—Moses warns about God's hot displeasure; God's fierce fury over their idolatry would cut off the rain.

Shutting the heavens and preventing rain would result in drought and famine. God controls how much rain they received. If they turned to idols, they'd get no rain and they would be destroyed. Drought and famine in the Bible are usually directly connected with sin.

B. Maintain loyalty. .18-20

1. This language should sound familiar; it is mostly a restatement of 6:6-8. It's important to remember the lessons of history and teach them to your children, lest they forget and turn away from God.
2. .18 Lay up these words in your heart and your soul. They should attach these words to themselves; bind them to themselves and to their homes.
3. .19 teach them to your children.
4. .20 write them on your door posts.

Quote: Only by letting God's words invade every area of their lives and homes and by diligently teaching them to their children could the nation hope to escape the seduction of false worship and find permanent prosperity in the land of promise given by the Lord on oath to their forefathers.²

App: Do you want your family to “escape the seduction” of the temptations of this world? Then you better teach them God's word.

How do we protect our families from the falsehoods all around us? Follow these commands—maintain a high commitment to the Word of God. We must protect our families from the seductions and the deceit of this world.

² 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), 283.

Psalm 119:9 *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.*

Only a high commitment to the Word of God will protect us and our families from the temptations of the world.

C. Remember the covenant. .22-25

The success of the conquest was conditional; they must meet the conditions of the covenant.

1. .22 the conditions: If you obey these commandments, walk before God, hold fast to him—that's how to show love for God. Consistent allegiance/loyalty to God demonstrates love for God. You can't love God and live in flagrant, unrepentant disobedience.

This is how Israel had been living—in stubbornness, rebellion, idolatry, independence, and self-righteousness. But if they keep it up, they will fail.

2. .23-25 the consequences of obedience:

- a) .23 The Lord will drive out all of these nations from before you. God would guarantee Israel's success over the Canaanites.

- b) .24 You'll possess the land.

To tread on the land was to assert dominion over it. They would conquer their enemies and take the land.

The geographical boundaries in view here were from Lebanon in the north to the Sinai wilderness in the south, and then from the Euphrates in the east to the Mediterranean in the west.

- c) .25 No one will be able to stand against you. God will cause the enemy to dread and fear you. This is why Israel will be successful in the conquest of the PL; the Lord would fight for them.

Trans: Moses is reminding Israel of the blessings God has in store for them if they would simply obey and maintain their loyalty to God. The land is theirs for the taking if they obey the Lord. But if they fall into idolatry, they are doomed.

So again we see the same principle—blessings for obedience, destruction for disobedience. Life tends to work out better when we maintain loyalty to God and obey his commandments.

V. God requires a choice. 11:26–32

Moses has just stated the central idea of the covenant—love the Lord your God, serve him, keep his commandments, and teach them to your children. He then sets before them a choice.

A. .27 God sets before us a blessing for obedience. Loyalty to the covenant means obeying God’s commands—very simple. If you do that, you’ll enjoy all the blessings that he just described.

B. .28 God sets before us a curse for disobedience, and particularly for idolatry—going after other gods. Idolatry would break the covenant.

So this is a choice between loyalty or disloyalty. It’s a choice between the true God and idols. Adhere to the Lord and enjoy all the blessings he has promised, or adopt the Canaanite idols and experience destruction and death. It’s your choice.

App: It’s sad that so many people in our world today have chosen the curse instead of the blessing. They intentionally turn away from God and all his blessings so that they can enjoy everything the false gods promise. They think that the curse will be a blessing. But they are sorely mistaken. Their ultimate destiny is destruction. The pleasures of sin last only for a season.

C. .29-31 God determined that these blessings and curses be expressed in the PL once they arrive.

Deut is a restatement of the covenant that the people had already made with God—Ex 24:3-8. The people had previously agreed to obey the Lord.

Moses is telling the people to renew/reinforce the covenant when they arrive in the PL. They should have this ceremony that reviews the covenant blessings and cursings and recommits the people to that agreement. This is what they did—Josh 8:30-35.

Gerizim and Ebal were small mountains in the PL near the city of Shechem, where Abraham had built his first altar to the Lord (Gen 12:6-7).

App: We are not part of this covenant that God made with Israel, but the principles of blessing and cursing still pertain. If we want to enjoy God's blessings, then we must obey God's commandments. We must hold fast to God in loyalty and commitment.

If we turn away from God, then we can expect discipline, perhaps stern discipline. So it's always in our best interests to obey the Lord and remain loyal to him.

.32 A final exhortation—*be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today*. If Israel expects to possess the PL, they must obey God's commands. Faithfulness to God is the key to their success and prosperity.

Sincere commitment to the fundamentals is often the key to success in sports. A team needs to quit making rookie mistakes and commit themselves to doing things right. Disaster awaits for the teammates who are disloyal and desert for the other team.

Moses began this passage with a question—What does the Lord require of us? And the answer is that God requires sincere devotion and commitment to him. As Moses said in chapter 6, we must love the Lord with our heart, soul, and strength. This passage is a strong call to commitment, loyalty, and allegiance to God, especially in the face of idolatry.

And sincere devotion to God results in obedience to his commands. We cannot claim to love God and at the same time live in flagrant, unrepentant disobedience.

Which of these outcomes do you want—a blessing or a curse? Success or failure? Victory or defeat? The outcome depends on our loyalty to God. If we want to enjoy the good things that God promises to us, we must (11:1).

If we want to protect our families from the deceitful temptations of the world, we must (11:18-20).

This is what the Lord requires, and this is what God will bless. If we want to enjoy the blessings and avoid the curses, we must love the Lord and obey his commands.