

## **Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20 (July 23, 2021)**

**Reflection:** *When people say they want to live life to the fullest, they mean living their life the way they want. Is this how Christians should live out their lives? What is the issue with living this way?*

**Goal:** That we don't define Christian living in living the way we want but rather living the way God wants for us. This has a huge difference, because living in sin not only means we live apart from God but don't experience any of the benefits of true and right living.

### **Read Deuteronomy 29:1-15, "Celebrating God's Covenantal Grace"**

**1. Briefly discuss what did Israel experienced in Egypt (v.2-3), What has God been doing for them these last forty years in the wilderness (v.5-8)? What does God say about Israel's understanding of the events of Egypt? (v.4) From v.6, what is the correct understanding they should draw from these events? From all the grace that God has shown to them, what should this encourage them to do (v.9)? Who were the partakers of this ceremony? (v.10-11,14-15) What was the purpose of coming to this ceremony? (v.12-13)**

#### **i. Briefly discuss what did Israel experienced in Egypt (v.2-3)**

- Israel was enslaved by the Egyptians
- Made to work/worship Pharaoh
- Commissioning Moses to be his mouthpiece
- Deliverance and freedom from slavery
- Ten plagues

Note: Most people in assembly were likely born during 40 years in desert and did not witness the nation's rescue from Egypt. Moses draws them to Yahweh's past action by speaking as if they were eyewitnesses to those events.

#### **ii. What has God been doing for them these last forty years in the wilderness (v.5-8)?**

- Lead 40 years in wilderness
- Clothes and sandals not worn while there
- Not eaten bread or drunk strong drink or wine
- When entered the Transjordan they had taken over Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan
- Took their land and gave it as an inheritance to Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh

#### **iii. What does God say about Israel's understanding of the events of Egypt? (v.4)**

- The people were not given understanding of these events. They did not know the significance of Yahweh's actions.

#### **iv. From v.6, what is the correct understanding they should draw from these events?**

Like great acts of Exodus, it proved that he was Yahweh, their God.

- God had sustained them with mostly manna and water (sometimes quail). These seem like purer foods than bread (which was common) and alcoholic drinks (since in the ancient world clean water was hard to find)
- Taking the land demonstrated they could trust in Yahweh

**Goal:** They were to see what the last generation failed to see, that God was their God

v. From all the grace that God has shown to them, what should this encourage them to do (v.9)?

- Now that God has faithfully demonstrated his love for them, they now should prove their faith to Yahweh by keeping the words of this covenant by doing them
- They would prosper in everything they did if they remained committed to God, as they had prospered in desert

vi. Who were the partakers of this ceremony? (v.10-11,14-15) What was the purpose of coming to this ceremony? (v.12-13)

**Partakers:** heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp. It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.

**Purpose:** that they may enter the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, and that He will establish his people, he would be their God.

**Read Deuteronomy 29:16-28, "Consequences of Spurning God's Covenantal Grace"**

**2. What are the Israelites to beware of? (v.16-18, 19-21) What are the consequences for these people? (v. 20-21) How will the collective consequences affect the land? (V.22-23) What will the future generation, foreigners in the land, and other nations say about this devastation of the land? (v.22-28)**

i. What are the Israelites to beware of? (v.16-18, 19-21)

- 1) As you have seen idols in Egypt (which are treated as valuable objects because of materials used to make with it), beware of man, woman, clan, or tribe that follow idols that turns away from the Lord
- 2) Beware who idolize themselves. He will bless himself, pays no heed to the sanctions to which Israel have bound themselves and images himself secure walking in his own way

Note:

- These people are poison (poisonous and bitter fruit)
- Water and dry are referring to blessings and curses found in Deu 28. Where water was a sign of blessing and dry was a sign of curse. Meaning that the person swept away God's blessings and curses and did not follow them.

ii. What are the consequences for these people? (v. 20-21)

- Curses will settle on that person and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven (likely meaning die)
  - o Share a fate with evil nations Canaanites (7:24) and Amalekites (25:19)

iii. How will the collective consequences affect the land? (V.22-23) What will the future generation, foreigners in the land, and other nations say about this devastation of the land? (v.22-28)

- Seems to point t collective failure will lead to curses falling on the land

- Children and foreigners will see affliction of the land and the sickness
  - o Whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, like Sodom and Gomorrah and other nations which the Lord overthrew in his anger
- Nations will ask: why has the Lord done this? Why caused the anger?
- People will say (these people are likely not Israelites): because they abandoned the covenant of the Lord, God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and went to serve other gods.
  - o God's anger kindled against the land, and curses fell
- Uprooting people from their land, and cast them into another

**3. How would you describe a Christian's responsibility to live faithfully within the New Covenant? (cf. John 14:15, Matt 22:37-40, Jas 2:20-26) How would you warn someone who calls themselves a Christian but doesn't think it is important to live faithfully? In what ways do Christians prosper when they obey? (cf. Luke 6:35, John 15:9-11, Rom 6:16-18)**

**i. How would you describe a Christian's responsibility to live faithfully within the New Covenant? (cf. John 14:15, Matt 22:37-40, Jas 2:20-26)**

Christians are responsible to follow God's commandments which are summarized in the two greatest commandments, to love the Lord your God with your heart mind soul and str, and second, to love your neighbour as yourself. A failure to follow the Lord means their religion is useless.

**ii. How would you warn someone who calls themselves a Christian but doesn't think it is important to live faithfully?**

**Goal:** to consider what they would say in a situation where Christians aren't living as they should. Perhaps there are some in the group who may hear their response.

**iii. In what ways do Christians prosper when they obey? (cf. Luke 6:35, John 15:9-11, Rom 6:16-18)**

This is not an exhaustive list:

- *A greater reward* – God (Luke 6:35) – The Bible mentions rewards in multiple times as a motivator, and therefore it is not wrong for us to think of a heavenly reward as a motivator as well. However, the rewards are not exactly clear what they are, however, we know that the greatest gift is God himself (Gen 15:1, Phil 3:14), and it is likely this gift in heaven is to experience God in a deeper way.
- *Joy and Happiness* (John 15:9-11) – The Bible and Christians throughout history see the value of their faith and obedience in seeing that it is for their ultimate joy and pleasure to follow God. Obedience, for the Christian, brings joy and happiness through faithfulness.
- *Freedom from sin* (Rom 6:16-18) – Paul clearly sees that we are all enslaved to something, whether that be sin or righteousness. However, when we are enslaved to righteousness there is a freedom from sin, and this is true kind of freedom that can only be experienced in Christ and in obedience.

**Read Deuteronomy 29:29-30:10, "Dark Days Behind, A Bright Future Ahead"**

**4. Israel will undergo a restoration once the blessings and curses have come, and all of this are part of the secret things of God. (29:29-30:1) What will this restoration look like between God and his children? (v.2-6, 8-10) How will Israel's foes be affected when this restoration happens? (v.7)**

i. What will this restoration look like between God and his children? (v.2-6, 8-10)

Change in us:

- Really to fulfill the covenant obligations of obedience through love
- Return to God and sincere obedience and love of God of entire being
- Circumcised hearts

God's restoration will look like:

- Really receive the covenant blessings
- Restore their fortunes
- compassion, mercy and gather
- New land,
- Prosperity
- Circumcise our hearts

ii. How will Israel's foes be affected when this restoration happens? (v.7)

<sup>7</sup>And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.

**5. How do Christians today connect with these verses? Christians have been told their hearts have been circumcised (cf. Rom 2:25-29, Deu 30:6), what does circumcision of the heart mean and how should this practically affect us today?**

i. How do Christians today connect with these verses?

- We receive these blessings now and more fully when Christ returns
- Our salvation is about repent, believing, and holding to God's Lordship
- Our orientation to God has changed because of the Holy Spirit
- Change of heart, circumcision of the heart, given a new heart
- We will receive ultimate blessings of a New Heaven and Earth, prosperity will follow

ii. Christians have been told their hearts have been circumcised. (cf. Rom 2:25-29, Deu 30:6) What does circumcision of the heart mean and how should this practically affect us today?

Romans 2:25-29 seems to be about obedience and Deu 30:6 is about a sincere love of God. Hence, circumcision of the heart seems synonymous with having a new heart or regeneration where we have had our hearts changed to love the Lord and obey him as we should.

**Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20, "Choose Life"**

**6. Moses tells us that God's ways are not too hard to follow. (v.11-14) Describe the two paths from v.15-20, 1) life and good, 2) death and evil. How do people choose life in the New Covenant (John 14:6, 1 John 5:11-12)?**

i. Moses tells us that God's ways are not too hard to follow. (v.11-14) (some general statements)

The Lord's commands are not unknowable, unreasonable, incomprehensible, or impossible (Daniel Block, Commentary on Deuteronomy). We do not have to go into heaven or cross the sea to know what the Lord is saying, He has revealed the word to us and it is very near.

*Note on Romans 10:6-8 if brought up:*

Paul picks up this passage in Romans 10:6-8. However, Paul's argument is somewhat different than this passage. In Romans Paul is acting as a rhetorician and his point was to exalt Christ by highlighting him as the climax of the covenant and to expose Jewish abuse of the law by divorcing it from faith. (Daniel Block, Commentary on Deuteronomy)

ii. Describe the two paths from v.15-20, 1) life and good, 2) death and evil.

**Life:**

Love the Lord and walk in his ways, commandments, decrees, and laws. The Lord will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. They were called to choose life so their children could flourish, love him, and hold him fast. They are further reminded that the "Lord is your life", and bless you in the land as he promised the Patriarchs.

*Note about meaning of the word "life"*

Life here means a blessing in the physical life where they would put off the effects of sin and death.

**Death:**

Turn away from God, to not obey him, and worshipping other gods. These people will be destroyed and will not live long in the land.

iii. How do people choose life in the New Covenant (John 14:6, 1 John 5:11-12)?

By trusting Jesus as their Lord and saviour. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and we can only have true life in the Son and there is no real life outside of him.

**Jesus tells us there are two paths in life. As he says in Matthew 7:13-14, we can enter through the wide gate, the one that is well travelled and where we still live in our sin, or we can choose the narrow gate that few will find but leads to life. Just like Moses, Jesus calls us to choose life or the path of life. This path of life means loving and obeying God with all of our being, and though it may be hard at times, we experience all the wonders of salvation and blessings found only in God. Friends, reflect on your life tonight to see whether you have a sincere love and obedience to God, and if you don't, this is the time to choose life!**