

Date : 30 July 2023

Topic : Remembering God's Covenant: Learning from the Past to Safeguard our Inheritance

Key Passage: Deuteronomy 1-4

Key Verses : Deuteronomy 4:9

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren *nkjv*

Key Word : Take Heed

Introduction

The book of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Pentateuch holds significant importance in providing the foundation of faith in the Covenant Relationship with God. It is the Old Testament book most frequently quoted by Jesus. The Greek meaning of the word "Deuteronomy," is "second law," or "repetition of the law".

In its first four chapters, Deuteronomy captures the journey of the Israelites from Exodus to the plains of Moab, where Moses addresses the new generation of Israelites before they enter the Promised Land, urging them to reaffirm their commitment to God's Covenant. The new generation of Israelites, who were young or not even born yet during the Exodus, faced the task of forming a new national identity as they were about to enter the Promised Land after forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Moses, having led the Israelites for four decades, had firsthand experience of the consequences of disobedience. He understood that the success of the Israelite nation depended on their faithfulness to God's covenant. Knowing that he was nearing the end of his life and would not enter the Promised Land, Moses felt like a father with a deep responsibility and urgency to pass on God's instructions and wisdom to the next generation before his passing.

What are the Challenges the New Generation Faced?

1. Lack of personal experience in Egypt and had limited knowledge of God's miracles

The new generation did not witness the great miracles in Egypt, such as the parting of the Red Sea

- Our children, especially those growing up in a Christian family, can relate to the second generation's experiences even more as compared with the first generation believers.

2. No memory of God's initial covenant

Unlike their parents' generation who experienced the covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai, the second generation Israelites must forge their own faith and personal relationship with God instead of relying on their forefathers

- Many second-generation Christians lack genuine spiritual encounters like their first-generation parents, often becoming "cultural Christians" with less personal faith.

3. Facing new unknown territories and dealing with strong established nations

The new generation has to step out of their comfort zones to confront powerful, fortified nations already established there

- Today we face diverse challenges - uncertainty about the future, hostility to Biblical values, struggles with personal identity and relationships in a consumer-driven culture.

4. Maintaining faithfulness amidst abundance

The second generation transitioned from nomadic wilderness living to a settled life in Canaan's cities, facing the danger and temptations of compromising faith amidst comfort and prosperity, dealing with idolatry and immorality.

- We face the same temptations to compromise our faith in the midst of prosperity and comfort.

The key to safeguard our inheritance by not breaking the Covenant is:

- 'Take heed' - Pay close attention, watch ourselves closely (*guard and attend to*)
 - Our main problem: Forgetfulness (*lest you forget*)
 - No memory or neglect or disregard, paid no attention to, downplay its importance

4 Crucial Areas to Take Heed and Pay Close Attention to safeguard our inheritance:

1. Take Heed that God is a 'God of Covenant' *Deuteronomy 1-4*

- we are to remain faithful to the Covenant and obey God's commandments

- **God is the Unwavering Covenant Keeper**
(God operates with individuals on the basis of Covenants - special relationship)
 - i) Blessings for Covenant Faithfulness
 - God promises blessings, favor and protection to those who faithfully keep His covenant, and obey His commandments ensuring prosperity and well-being
 - ii) Curses for Covenant Disobedience
 - Breaking God's Covenant or disobeying His commandments lead to consequences and discipline – hardships, troubles and the removal of God's protection and favor
- **Why do we forget to take heed of the Covenant?**
 - i) Ignorant of its significance
 - Fail to see the Covenant as the unseen key of wisdom and blessings to receive fullness of blessings in our lives *Deuteronomy 4:6*
 - ii) Negative perception on the Covenant
 - Perceive it merely as a binding burden with swift punishment, disregarding its precious relationship with God and overlooking its blessings

2. Take Heed to Learn from Past Mistakes *Deuteronomy 1-3*

The entire chapters from Deuteronomy 1 to 3 are a recall by Moses of the events and lessons learned from the previous generation of Israelites (the first generation)

- **What mistakes did the Israelites make?**
 - They broke the Covenant:
 - **Contempt for God's promises rejecting His inheritance** *Deuteronomy 1:19-40*
Fear overshadows God's command at Kadesh Barnea, leading to their rebellion against entering the Promised Land.

- **Idolatry and immorality** *Numbers 25:9*
At Baal Peor, the Israelites committed idolatry and immorality with Moabite women, greatly offended God and suffered severe consequences— a plague that killed 24,000 people

- **Consequences of Breaking Covenant:**

- **Time delay (wasted time)** - Wandering in the Wilderness *Deuteronomy 1:3*
 - Instead of a matter of weeks or months, it took the Israelites 40 years to reach the Promised Land
- **Exclusion from Entering the Promised Land** *Deuteronomy 1:35, 37*
 - Miss out on God's spiritual promises and inheritance, experiencing a lack of joy, peace, abundant life, barrenness, spiritual dryness, and unfulfilled purpose, leading to emptiness and a loss of direction
- **Defeated by enemies** – by the Amorites *Deuteronomy 1:44-45*
 - Experience no victory - broken relationships, health issues, financial hardships, mental struggles, and spiritual defeat such as encountering doubts, dryness, and attacks from the enemy
- **Judgment due to continual disobedience and idolatry** *Deuteronomy 4:26-28*
 - Live short life (*eg plagues*) *Deuteronomy 4:26*
 - Many deaths (*only a few will survive – Joshua & Caleb*) *Deuteronomy 4:26*
 - Driven out of the promised land and scattered to a foreign land
 - Wars, civil wars, natural disasters, economic and political influence from foreign entities, territorial disputes, occupation, living under foreign rule

- **3 Kinds of Responses toward Past Mistakes**

People fall into 3 distinct learning attitudes:

- The Oblivious** – those who refuse to learn from past mistakes
Unaware, forgetful, lacking knowledge or consciousness about the mistakes; or simply not paying attention of it
- The Experiential** – those who only learn from their own personal mistakes
- The Wise** – those who learn from the mistakes of others, avoiding unnecessary setbacks along their journey *Deuteronomy 4:9*

Which one do you identify with?

- **God's gracious call to Repentance** *Deuteronomy 4:29-31*
 - Urgency to repent before disaster strikes

3. Take Heed in Choosing the Right Lane – that leads to our Inheritance

- **Which lane should we avoid?**
Jesus: "Broad is the way that leads to death"

a) Comfort & Complacency Lane – as chosen by both generations

The Lord commanded the Israelites to get moving back to the right track

Leave Mount Sinai - "You have stayed long enough ... move on Deuteronomy 1:6-7

Mount Seir "You have wandering around in this hill; turn to the north" Deuteronomy 2:2

Zered Brook "Get moving. Cross the Zered Brook" Deuteronomy 2:13

- First generation : back to Egypt mindset
- Second generation: wilderness contentment losing destiny

b) Fearful and Doubtful Lane – which the old generation chose

At Kadesh Barnea, the people gave a negative report, stating that the inhabitants ... too strong for them, and the cities were fortified and very large Deuteronomy 1:27

- When we confront 'giants' in an uncertain future and circumstances

c) Distraction & Temptation Lane – which the new generation had chosen earlier

Moses warns the people against idolatry and the worship of false gods Deuteronomy 4:15-19

- When we are tempted and become distracted by compromising with worldly values and practices

4. Take Heed to Teach the Next Generations Deuteronomy 4:9

Moses stresses the important responsibility of every parent to pass down their faith to disciple and mentor their children and grandchildren.

• **Why do we neglect to teach the next generation**

a) Lack of Knowledge

- Unaware of the importance of passing down Godly values to the next generations
- Overlook the significant negative influence of Worldview and secular influences

b) Lack of Values - Busyness and Priorities

- Busy schedules and handling other pressing daily issues
- Prioritising short-term goals over long-term investments in teaching and building strong spiritual foundations for the next generation

c) Lack of Skills - Disconnect with the Younger Generation

- Generation gaps and differences in communication styles – inability to communicate and engage
- Fear of rejection by their own children
- Insufficient knowledge on effective teaching methods and techniques, leading to a lack of confidence in their ability to teach effectively
- Inability to address their children's unanswered questions and inquiries about faith and intellectual skepticism

Applications:

- 1) Who do you identify as your next generation?
- 2) Which area in your life would you want to safeguard the journey of faith in your covenant relationship with the Lord?
- 3) How do you intend to do it?