

**Date** : 5 November 2023  
**Theme** : Covenant Renewal (Preparation for BC 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)  
**Topic** : Stumbling blocks to attaining our inheritance  
**Passage** : Deuteronomy 9-10:11  
**Key Verse** : *“Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. <sup>14</sup> Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven...” Deuteronomy 9:13-14 (NKJV)*

## Introduction

God desires all of us to attain to the inheritance He has given us. But why is it important for His people to be warned of the dangers along the way? God highlights the stumbling block of stubborn hearts that could shipwreck their attempt. He calls such people stiff-necked people. What is a stiff-necked person? He is one who is bent on his own way.

The new generation poised on entering the promised land would fail to arrive if lessons from the past were not learnt. In order to instruct them, Moses drew important lessons from the past to warn the new generation against stubborn behaviour so as to avoid God’s judgement. Stiff-necked behaviour is absence of fear for God. It breaks the terms of covenant relationships.

Lessons of the past would include their sins of idolatry and rebellion, and God’s extended grace upon them.

### 1. What was the call for Israel concerning the promised land?

a) Moses began with the mission statement

- Moses’ call for Israel to dispossess the nations.  
- *“Go in and dispossess nations” Deuteronomy 9:1*
- They were to dispossess nations far stronger than them. God promised to fight for them provided they humbled themselves and obeyed His laws and judgements.

b) Situation: The problems they would face

- Nations greater and mightier than them.  
*“The people are strong and tall—descendants of the famous Anakite giants. You’ve heard the saying, ‘Who can stand up to the Anakites?’” Deuteronomy 9:2*
- Cities large and fortified.
- But the biggest problem would be their rebellion and stubborn behaviour that would block them from attaining their inheritance.  
*“Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people’” Deuteronomy 9:13*

## 2. What should they understand about God's holiness in order NOT to fail?

Being stiff-necked, they kept to their stubborn ways and failed to see the hand and purpose of God in their lives. Their stiff-necked behaviour caused them to ignore the commands of God and followed their own wicked ways instead.

To be victorious they must understand God's utter holiness if they were to partner with Him and not be resistant to being directed by God. What God hates is their stiff-necked attitude.

Understand that God's holiness burns up anything unholy.

***"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Deuteronomy 4:24***  
(consuming = to utterly destroy)

- God's anger burns against idolatry which disrespects His holiness.  
***"... the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire." Deuteronomy 9:3***
- God's wrath is against those who opposed Him
- God hates self-righteousness  
***"Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'." Deuteronomy 9:4***
- God hates rebellion against Him (*Deuteronomy 9:6*)  
***"... provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD." Deuteronomy 9:7***
- The root cause of rebellion is being stiff-necked.  
***"... you are a stiff-necked people (vs6)***
- They were stiff-necked from the time they left Egypt and throughout the entire journey.
- They had provoked God when they reduced Him into an image of a golden calf (a god of the Egyptians).  
***"Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you." Deuteronomy 9:8***
  - God wanted to destroy them (*Deuteronomy 9:19*)
  - the worship of false gods breaks Commandment #2.
  - they deserved death.
- God did not want the new generation to end the same way. So, He tested them in 4 ways so that they would know the condition of their hearts.
- Eventually God extended grace to the new generation and warned them.

### 3. How do we prepare ourselves for a covenant renewal with God at our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration?

In our sermon last week, we learnt that to enter the promised land and secure the R.I.C.H blessings of God, it is essential for us to check our heart condition to make sure to pass the H.O.P.E Tests.

The mistakes of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Israelites must be avoided. The old generation did not keep the covenant. As the new generation we must prepare our hearts to renew our covenant before entering into the next decade as a church.

a) Do not under estimate your weakness and rebellious heart.

- Notice the list of rebellion and disbelief in their journey from Sinai. Understand how they rebelled against the Lord in their journey from Sinai to Kadesh (*Deuteronomy 9:22-23*)

(i) At Taberah – ‘burning of the Lord’

*“...the fire of the LORD burned among them.” Numbers 11:1*

- they complained about their hardship to the extent the “fire of the Lord” consumed the murmuring Israelites.

(ii) At Massah – quarrelling

*So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” Exodus 17:7*

- the Israelites were so thirsty they were ready to stone Moses for lack of water and questioned the faithfulness of God.

(iii) At Kibroth Hataavah – ‘graves of greediness’

- they complained that they were tired of eating manna. God sent them quails but so was the pestilence for their moaning.

*“while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.” Numbers 11:33*

(iv) At Kadesh Barnea they rebelled by refusing God’s offer to go up to the promised land.

Note: God sees our rebellion: *“... ‘I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people.’” (Deuteronomy 9:13)*

b) Our rebellion starts with complaining about difficulties.

We are all prone to stubbornness; over time we are angry with our leader leading to forthright rejection of obedience to God’s offer of the Promised Land.

- God does not turn a blind eye to our rebellion.
- We need the intercession of our leader to plead on our behalf.

c) Repent and make a fresh start

To make a fresh start, God ordered Moses to do 2 things:

- (i) Prepare 2 tablets so that the covenant renewal would be based on the 10 Commandments; and
- (ii)** An ark for the tablets to be kept and carried along so that His people would know what God required of them, removing any claim of ignorance as an excuse for disobedience.

**Application**

1. How would your own rebellion or stiff-necked responses to God look like?
2. Will you be open to your leader pointing out attitudes of self-righteousness in your life? (as it is very difficult for every one of us to see the blind spots in our own lives).
3. Spend time in prayer to 'dispossess' all these impediments in order to possess the rich inheritance God has for you.