

Date : 12 May 2024
Theme : Attaining our Inheritance
Topic : The Hour of Decision
Passage : Deuteronomy 30
Key Verse : *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live... Deuteronomy 30:19*

Introduction

In *Deuteronomy 30*, Moses, as the outgoing leader, is facing a new generation, poised to enter a new territory. Leaving their wilderness journey for stability in the land of milk and honey is both an ending and a new beginning. Will they succeed in the new land?

- For Moses, that moment in time is not unlike a pastor, who, when officiating a marriage ceremony, was providing the opportunity for the newlyweds to declare their covenant vows. It is a vow to choose faithfulness for their entire journey of life, never to betray trust or faith.
- Smart people does not equal faithful ones. Like Jeff Skilling who, in 1979, graduated at the top 5% of his Harvard Business School class as a Baker scholar. 25 years later, he was charged for conspiracy and securities fraud. As CEO of Enron, he triggered the collapse of the biggest energy provider in USA. He made one wrong choice, the choice to cheat. *Proverbs 20:6* states a faithful man who can find. Men who are faithful have always been in short supply.

- God's covenant success

In his final week on earth. Moses is speaking to a generation to tell them how to succeed in the new land... The secret? Faithfulness to the Lord.

...therefore, keep the terms of this covenant and obey them so that you may be successful in everything you do...so you may enter into the covenant of the Lord your God and into the oath that the Lord is making with you today... Deuteronomy 29:9, 12

enter = transaction (alluding to dividing a beast in two and passing between the parts in covenant making)

oath = brings a curse if the thing sworn to is not fulfilled.

making = cutting a covenant; note that our covenant is confirmed by an oath.

- God's covenant is a covenant of love

(To seal the blessings, we must keep the covenant)

In *Deuteronomy 7: 6 -9*, the Lord said He loved them....*He keeps His gracious covenant loyalty (lavishes His unfailing love) for 1,000 generations...of those who love Him and keep His commands.*

Moses, speaking from an intimate knowledge of God's love, uses the phrase in *Deuteronomy...He blessed you...* far more often than that found in any other biblical book. Among the first 5 books of the Bible, the words *...love...rejoice...bless you...* are used most frequently. Surely, *Deuteronomy* is a book of love – God's love for us and for our well-being and our response of gratitude to His great acts of grace. Yet Moses, realises how difficult the process to convince the new generation to trust God's love – the only path that will lead to their success.

In *Deuteronomy 30*, he persuades and shows the need to make the choice for blessing resolutely.

1. To attain to the blessings, a choice must be made.

Like the children of Israel, the moment of truth is also in our court. Each of us must face the moment of decision, everyday – a moment on whose outcome everything of our life depends.

A choice must be made to the offer of life and prosperity or death and destruction. If we choose death and destruction, the consequences would be beyond our control. This is a solemn moment when the Lord lays the cards before us. Will the new generation say Yes to the Lord to enter into covenant relationship? The crux of the decision is whether to put Him first, as Lord.

a) The Lord's offer

...See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction... Deuteronomy 30: 15 NIV

- A call to get our attention to what is being said.

• **Two alternatives**

Life and prosperity

- Quality of life (not merely living). Prosperity means 'well-being, doing well in all areas, not just material well-being. In the community, family, economy.
- In addition, God promises abundance, His cooperation, protection.

Death and adversity (= evil, misery, distress)

- Curses
- In place of love and care for one another would be envy, exploitation, distrust and isolation, affecting community, family and economy.
- In addition, supernatural chastisement, adverse weather, invasion of enemy (= loss of freedom to foreign invaders).

b) The Lord's appeal (to our hearts)

...you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him...For the Lord is your life... Deuteronomy 30:20

- The Lord is appealing to our will to choose life. In *Deuteronomy 30:19* He is appealing to our hearts to choose Him, to follow Him wholeheartedly. He repeats *...all your heart...* many times. Half-heartedness is not acceptable. A divided heart or *...double mindedness...* will always lead to betrayal. A double minded person (= having 2 minds and 2 souls) is unstable and confused in his thoughts and behaviour. Such a person cannot receive anything from the Lord because God will not grant His blessings upon the double-minded. *...no man can serve 2 masters...either he will be devoted to one or despise the other... Matthew 6:24.*

- The choice to follow Him wholeheartedly

...obey Him with all your heart and with all you soul according to everything I command you today Deuteronomy 30:2

...circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live Deuteronomy 30:6

...if you obey...with all your heart... and with all your soul Deuteronomy 30:10

...the word is near you...in your heart so you may obey it... Deuteronomy 30:14

- **2 results**

Covenant renewal

To restore integrity of God's people; no duplicity.

Overcome attitude of pretence, neutrality (not serve the Lord and Baal / the world).

- Our covenant response to the Lord to be one of undivided loyalty and allegiance (because He is our Creator, Redeemer, Covenant-Keeper = loyalty).

Covenant judgement

An attitude of half-heartedness in service, obedience, worship (S.O.W) amounts to idolatry and the result is covenant judgement. Do not treat our Lord as a God-on-the-sidelines.

c) The Lord's witness

I set before you today – life and prosperity, death and destruction

It is a choice no one can make for us.

- The Lord calls the entire population of heaven and earth to witness this transaction. (The same scenario is played out in *Hebrew 12*. After listing out all the heroes of faith in God's hall of fame *Hebrews 11*, a great cloud of witnesses is watching, from Abel to Moses etc, urging that we will choose life).

2. The wrong choice carries serious consequences (which are not in our control)

a) The cost of your choice

If we choose to serve other "gods" and idols (including silver or gold, the pleasures of this life, or deceitful riches) we must consider whether the cost is worth it.

- Our service

In *Deuteronomy 28:47 - 48*, the Lord says ...*Because you did not serve the Lord joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve your enemies the Lord sends against you...*

- How did this pan out in the days of the Judges? While Israel was occupying that rich land, they were living in dire poverty. For 350 years, Israel stubbornly rejected God and the result was abject poverty.
- Further the Lord had warned ...*The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away; from the ends of the earth... Deuteronomy 28:49*. It happened in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, Xerxes, Syrians, Greeks, etc foreign powers plagued the nation of Israel for many years. This is the curse mentioned in *Deuteronomy 28: 53 -57*

b) Only the Lord can reverse the consequences when we repent and return to Him.

- In *Deuteronomy 30*, the Lord, out of mercy, offered hope. When you and your children return to the Lord, He will restore your fortunes. *Deuteronomy 30:2*
- He will circumcise your hearts and you will love Him with all your heart. Circumcising your heart is an act of covenant making in which our hearts are set aside to love God.
- *Deuteronomy 30:8, 9* gives the answer as to how He would restore their fortunes. ...*You will again obey the Lord and follow all His commands... Then the Lord will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands...*
 - But this obedience to His commands must be wholehearted. ...*keep His commands with all your heart, and with all your soul... Deuteronomy 3:10*

c) The loss of testimony

The wrong choice in abandoning the covenant of the Lord has embarrassing results for the community. All the nations will be surprised when such severe misfortunes fall on Israel.

Their question? ...*Why has the Lord done this to this land?...Why this fierce, burning anger? Deuteronomy 29: 24*

The answer: ...*It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the Lord...*

...*They went off and worshipped other gods... Deuteronomy 29:25, 26*

3. What is the context of covenant renewal?

- The context of covenant renewal is personal, familial and communal.
 - Joshua said *...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord Joshua 24:15*
A father's declaration which expressed his personal commitment to the Lord would mean his whole family would be included.
 - It also means the family members would be in the community, partaking the external activities of the covenant with the people of God.
(Covenant breaking, on the other hand, unravels relationships in family, society and church).
- The basis of covenant renewal is the recommitment to obey His Word and His laws (10 Commandments). In essence, to love God and to love my neighbour – both require community living to practise the 10 commandments in daily living.
 - Covenant renewals are serious tools for community discipleship, mission, outreach – these require covenant loyalty.
(opposite: The refusal to commit, to keep your word, breaks covenant).
- At stakes are survival and inter-generational strength. Our covenant renewal is the blue-print for future generations. It expresses our best efforts to God and to each other.

Application

My response

- Is the choice difficult to make?
Some say the Lord's requirement to serve, obey and worship Him for covenant keeping is too difficult. But the Lord says *...is it not too difficult for you (to know and to keep them), not too far... Deuteronomy 30:11*
- The Lord's answer is *...No, the word is very near you... Deuteronomy 30:14*
It is not too difficult. It only entails serving, obeying and worship.
On the other hand, the neglect of these areas will lead to death and destruction.
- Is it worth facing the consequences compared to the blessings which God wants to give us? 3 times He uses the word *prosperous* or *most prosperous*. Prosper means to do well, well-being; of which material well-being is but one aspect. *Deuteronomy 30: 6, 9*. The Lord wants to prosper us in His way. Covenant keeping is God's way.