



Deuteronomy 29:1-9
The Covenant

Deuteronomy 29:1 These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.

2 Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land --

3 "the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders.

4 "Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.

5 "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.

6 "You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.

7 "And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle, and we conquered them.

8 "We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh.

9 "Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

We find ourselves now at the point where this new generation is being called upon to renew the covenant with the Lord their God, to covenant as their parents had covenanted with God at Mt. Sinai. Moses had opened up the Law to them he had once again applied the moral law to them and their nation. Moses had repeated the commands which the people were to observe as their part of the covenant, and the promises and threatenings which God would make good (according as they behaved themselves) as part of the covenant. And note that while Moses had spoken, he was acting as a mediator, between God and the People. The Lord's Shepherds cannot add to or take away from the commandments of God – As Matthew Henry put it:

"It does not lie in the power of ministers to fix the terms of the covenant; they are only to dispense the seals of it."

The question is will they make the covenant, will they keep the covenant, will they trust this God?

There are many nations that can craft a depressing story. The French and the Scandinavians for instance. But there are two nations in particular that have the ability to craft the world's most incredibly depressing stories, the runner up is the Russians, there is never a "lived happily ever after"

quality to their tales. Maybe things turned out well for them, or maybe they drowned. Even their happy stories tend to end unhappily. But by far the winners are for grindingly depressing, are the Irish.

Angela's Ashes is Frank McCourt's incredibly depressing memoir of his life in Ireland. Frank's father Malachy was all boasting and promises, *won't I do this for you*. And yet he spent all their welfare money in pubs, drinking even the money Frank gave him to buy milk for the baby. Frank's father eventually found a job at a defence plant in Coventry, England, yet he sent money back to his struggling family in Ireland only once. The story is one of a father who constantly made promises, and then broke every promise he ever made, he was utterly faithless. But it was always, tomorrow I'll do this even though I never have.

Anyone who believed the promises of such a man would be foolish indeed. They could not trust him and had to turn to others in order to even survive. *The thing is, you would think looking at the history of Israel that this was the kind of God they served, and yet nothing could have been further from the truth!*

The Lord had proven true to his promises to the people in the past, and not just over the past few years while they were in the wilderness of Sinai, but since the creation! The Lord had made promises to the Patriarchs such as Abraham that had taken 400 years to deliver on, such as to make them into a great nation, as numerous as the sands of the ocean, bring them into Egypt, bring them out of Egypt, and yet he had delivered on all of them.

The people themselves had been shown the faithfulness and provision of God during their time in the wilderness. They had been preserved in the midst of a desert! There was no food there, yet they had been fed, day by day, there was no water there, yet he had given them water. Even their clothes and their sandals had not worn out.

I can't keep a pair of jeans for a year before I've walked off the cuffs and have holes in the knees. My odd walk ensures that I wear down one side of my shoes every year. And yet their clothes lasted for 40 YEARS!

Every day He had led them, and they had not become lost. He had also destroyed their enemies one by one, first Egypt and then Amalek and then He had begun to deliver land to them, in each case destroying nations more powerful and better equipped for war than they were.

By these miracles they were made to know that the Lord **was God**, and by these mercies that he **was their God**.

Incidentally, for those who are skeptical about God and his works – just one of these events would have been pretty amazing, but to happen again, and again, and again utterly defies probability. Just by itself, one manna fall would have been amazing, but to happen EVERY day except the Sabbath for Forty Years???

Frederick the Great once demanded of the court chaplain an unanswerable proof of the Bible's authenticity, the answer was given: "the Jew, your majesty!"

You can try to deny, but the fact is these people were in Egypt, they were delivered from there, they wandered for forty years in the desert, they survived, they entered into the land, they defeated superior

forces again and again, and long after every other ancient race from the same area had become a footnote in history they still survived. If that is sufficient evidence of God, nothing is.

But sadly - Despite their witnessing of the Lord's work, and their receipt of his blessings, the people still do not have true knowledge, it is amazing how often the Lord's people fail to understand what the Lord is doing/has done or understand His nature.

Instead they grumbled and complained and failed to trust. They really thought it was possible that the Lord, who had always proven faithful would suddenly prove faithless and destroy them or leave them or fail to provide for them.

And why? Because as *Psalm 50:21* puts it: ***"You thought that I was altogether like you"***

Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Mal. 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

People will not believe unless the Lord enables them to do so: Note, (1.) The hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart, are the gift of God. All that have them have them from him. (2.) God gives not only food and raiment, but wealth and large possessions, to many to whom he does not give grace. Many enjoy the gifts who have not hearts to perceive the giver, nor the true intention and use of the gifts. (3.) God's readiness to do us good in other things is a plain evidence that if we have not grace, that best of gifts, it is our own fault and not his; he would have gathered us and we would not.

Even the Lord's people are slow of heart and unable to understand His working :

*Luke 24:19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,
20 "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.*

21 "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

22 "Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us.

23 "When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive.

24 "And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

The Lord is Always Faithful: Some people have so much difficulty trusting God the Father, because they could not trust their own Father. Father's like Frank McCourt's or worse, are depressingly common. But the Lord is not, nor has he ever been like that: ***"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 "keeping mercy for***

thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

The Lord's people fail to keep covenant, but the Lord never does: Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth -- in Him.

11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Where it not for the Lord's work none of us could be saved.