

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 16**

**DEUTERONOMY
CHAPTERS 29 & 30**

INTRODUCTION

Deuteronomy 29 to 34 forms the third major and final section of the book. Chapters 29 and 30 register “the words of the covenant” which the LORD made with this new generation of Israelites on the plains of Moab just before they crossed over Jordan into the Promised Land. Following this section is the transfer of leadership and authority to Joshua (Ch.31). In Chapter 32, Moses recited a song of praise unto the LORD to the Israelites. Moses’ farewell message to the children of Israel is given in Chapter 33 and in the following chapter, the death of Moses.

The opening of Chapter 29 declares “these are the words of the covenant” which began in Chapter 4. The LORD commanded Moses to make this covenant with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb (29:1). We know that this is a new generation that was at the plains of Moab. They needed to be reminded of their history, the covenant God made with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob, and the covenant God made with their fathers at Mount Sinai. So it is not a new covenant in the sense that the previous covenants with the patriarchs and with their fathers in Sinai were not abrogated. Rather, it was an extension or a renewal of the covenant, as we will see later.

In these two chapters, God once again affirmed His character of faithfulness and compassion, His holiness and hatred for sin, and His sovereignty and power. What God says of Israel reflects our own nature and character, and it profits us if we are humble enough to learn and change in order to honour and glorify Him.

OUTLINE

A. Israel is Called to Keep the Words of the Covenant Because of What the LORD their God Had Done for Them (29:1-13)

1. The LORD made His covenant with Israel (29:1).
2. Moses gathered the people and recounted the mighty works of the LORD (29:2-8).
3. Moses exhorted every one and every group of the people to honour the words of the covenant the LORD their God had made with their forefathers (29:9-13).

B. Israel was Warned of Dire Consequences When They Breached the Covenant (29:14-20)

1. The covenant was applicable to a man, or a woman, or a family or a tribe (29:14-15, 18).

2. The reminder of what happened to the other nations that were idolatrous (29:16-17).
3. The LORD would not spare those who blessed themselves and walked not according to His commandments (29:18-20).

C. The Purpose of Chastisement is that Others Might Know that Israel Had Sinned and that Israel Might Repent and Return to the LORD their God (29:21-29)

1. The LORD God would chastise the offender and the curses of the covenant would be brought upon him (29:21).
2. The subsequent generation and all other nations might see and know the reason why (29:22-28).
3. The words of the covenant were revealed for Israel to keep and do (29:29).

D. The LORD their God would Re-Gather the Children of Israel when They Repented and Returned to Him (30:1-10).

1. When Israel recalled the words of the covenant and repented, the LORD would have compassion on them and re-gather them (30:1-4).
2. The LORD would bring them back to the Promised Land (30:5).
3. The LORD would cause them to love and obey Him (30:6-8).
4. God would bless them in all the works of their hands

when they obeyed His commandments (30:9-10).

E. The Words of the Covenant was Given to Israel for Them to Choose Between Blessings and Curses (30:11-20).

1. The words of the covenant were clearly given to Israel so that they might obey them (30:11-14).
2. God gave the choice to Israel to live and be blessed or to die and be cursed (30:15).
3. Israel would be blessed if they obeyed His commandments and walked in His ways (30:16).
4. Israel would be cursed if they turned their hearts away from God (30:17-18).
5. Moses called upon the people to choose life and live (30:19-20).

COMMENTARY

The Historical Basis

Having received the instruction from the LORD God to make a covenant with this new batch of Israelites in the land of Moab on His behalf, Moses gathered the people to hear him. Moses succinctly summarised the history of the people of Israel focusing particularly on the LORD's dealings with them and their disobedient response. The children of Israel have seen the great and mighty signs and miracles which the LORD performed in Egypt and to Pharaoh (at least those who were between 50 to 60 years old). In their wanderings in the wilderness for forty years, the LORD provided food and clothing for them, and

even preserved them by giving them victory in battles against their enemies, and the land inheritance to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh on the east of Jordan. Yet in spite of all these which they had seen and even after hearing the words spoken by the LORD God through Moses, they were dull of understanding. The LORD could have given them the enlightenment to see and understand, but the LORD would not because of their stubbornness and rebellion. It was a judicial judgement upon them. Having recounted their history to the present children of Israel, Moses called upon them, “keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do” (29:9). We learn from these words that the words of the covenant were given to Israel for the prosperity of the people.

God wants the best for His children if only they keep His commandments and do them. Israel’s religion is locked in actual historical events which they themselves saw and experienced. These marvellous blessings which they experienced were to move them to trust and obey the LORD. Instead they continued their faithlessness, stubbornness and rebellion. We are not far from them. God too has done great and wonderful things in our lives and in the lives of others whom we experience and see too. Moreover, we too have the Word of God preserved through the ages to the present time. We have the greater condemnation because we know how God dealt with the children of Israel and how He has so graciously dealt with us, and yet many are found wanting in loyalty

and faithfulness to Him. We rather believe in ourselves and our substances. How foolish we are.

The Covenant Community

The Israelites stood before the LORD God in that day (29:10). A detailed list is given: the tribal heads or chiefs, the elders, the officers, all the men, the little children, the wives, the resident foreigner, the woodcutter and the water bearer. We see a complete cross-section of the people. Its significance is clear: every one irrespective of their age and social status and means is a member of the covenant community. There is no discrimination. Standing before God they were all the same and enjoyed the terms and provisions of the covenant. God indeed is no respecter of persons and He receives anyone who humbly comes to Him, trusts and obeys Him. The covenant God made with them is to establish them as His people, and that they would acknowledge Him as their God as He had sworn unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (29:12-13). The covenant “this day” made with this new generation is connected to the covenant God made with the patriarchs. And it was not restricted to those who stood on that day before the LORD God. It is meant for those who were not there with them, those who were not born yet. The covenant extends to the future. God’s covenant with Israel is irrevocable!

The Essential Stipulation

There is an essential or a fundamental stipulation attached to the covenant. God requires Israel to worship and serve Him exclusively and no one else

(29:18). Moses reminded them that they had seen and known the idolatry practised by the Egyptians and detested by God. Israel might be tempted and turn away to worshipping and serving the gods of the other peoples. Moses describes graphically the sin of idolatry as a “root that beareth gall and wormwood” – the sin of idolatry takes root in the heart and produces a poison weed and wormwood. And what is even worse was that when he heard of the curses, instead of being convicted and repenting in sackcloth and ashes, he blessed himself in his heart. He comforts himself by saying that he had peace of heart even though he walked according to his own imaginations (29:19)! He is complacent and self-assured. When sin takes root in our hearts because we refuse to deal with it, it dulls our perception and warps our mind and judgement. It corrupts our thinking and distorts our values. The LORD declares that He will not spare such an idolater. God’s anger is upon such a person to the extent that his name will be blot out of heaven, if he persists and is unrepentant (29:20). God will separate the idolater from the others with evil (29:22-28). Others would see the plagues and diseases that afflicted them. And men would say that they had forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers and went and worshipped other gods. God would root them out of the land and they would be taken captive to another land.

Repentance & Restoration

The severe chastening is to awaken the sinner to repentance and return to the LORD. And if he

hearkens unto the words of the covenant and returns unto the LORD, and obeys the commandments of the LORD “with all his heart, and with all his soul,” the LORD would be compassionate to him and promised to deliver him from the land of his captivity. The LORD would gather them again from wherever they had been scattered (30:1-3). Repentance and return to God must be total and genuine, otherwise there is no forgiveness. If this requirement is met, God will go to any extent to restore Israel, and bring them back to the Promised Land. God would “circumcise thine heart”—give them the desire in their heart—to love Him so that they might live. The curses would fall on their enemies. God would bless Israel if they would keep and do all His commandments that are written in “the book of the law” (30:8-10).

The Word of the LORD

God’s commandments are known to them. They are not hidden from them (30:11). They have no cause to complain. The word of the LORD is near to them, even in their mouth and in their heart, so that they might do it. God has given enough of His words to the people. The secret things belong to God. Any word of God which is unclear, there is no need to speculate about. There is more than enough of His word which can be understood and which is sufficient for man. It is “in thy mouth, and in thy heart” indicates that the word of God is readily available. In the present case, it is available in the teaching of Moses. When the words of the LORD is taught and learned, they can be appropriated and made a part of our life. Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word of the LORD. We ought to diligently and gladly dig and discover and do His Word.

The Ultimate Choice

The whole book of Deuteronomy reaches its climax in these last verses of the chapter (30:15-20). God has given the words of His covenant to Israel. Now the ball is in Israel's court. God has set Israel at the crossroads: to choose life and goodness or to choose death and evil (30:15). The foundation to life and blessings is "to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and statutes and his judgments" (30:16). Alternatively, if the heart turns away from the LORD, and will not hear and obey, and is drawn to worship and serve other gods, the LORD will denounce the offender, and cause him to perish.

God calls on heaven and earth to witness the making of the covenant. A covenant must be made in the presence of two witnesses, like a marriage. Heaven and earth are two elements that will last. God's covenant with Israel is irrevocable and permanent. God has set before Israel blessings and curses. Moses called on Israel to choose life that they might live and their descendants, and enjoy the blessings of God (30:19-20).

SUMMARY

The words in these chapters speak to us individually. God has made a covenant with us and we accepted it the day we confess and repent of our sins, and accept the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our Saviour and Lord. If our repentance is genuine and true, we

can be assured that God keeps all His promises. On the other hand, we must show the evidence of our true salvation by worshipping God, keeping His commandments, and serving Him only and no one else. God sets before us this day to choose blessing or cursing; to choose life so that we might live or death. AMEN

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 29:1-9;
Acts 28:26-28

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 29:10-20;
Hebrew 12:14-17

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy
29:21-29; Acts 20:29-30

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 30:1-10;
1 John 1:9

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 30:11-20;
Romans 10:8-9.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What strong reasons do the Israelites have for being loyal to the LORD?

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2. Why did Moses fear that the Israelites would not be steadfast unto the LORD?

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3. Why did Moses fear that the Israelites would not be steadfast unto the LORD?

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4. Who are the members of the covenant community? What is significant about it?

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5. What covenant is referred to? Who else are included in the covenant? What does it indicate?

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6. What predictions did Moses make in Chapter 29:22-28?

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7. What is the purpose of giving the words of the covenant to Israel?

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8. What are the positive benefits to all those who worship God?

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9. How would God accomplish what He said he would do in Chapter 30:6?

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10. To what extent are the words spoken by Moses in Chapter 30:11-14 true today of the gospel?

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11. What do you think God wants us to understand by the word "life" in Chapter 30: 15 and 19?

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12. What is foundational to the covenant between God and Israel?

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13. What is God's character as revealed in Chapter 30?

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