

Eyes that Do Not, Will Not, and Cannot See – Deuteronomy 29:1-29

Introduction – This is a “problem” chapter for many on several levels. God renews covenant with Israel. Israel is not going to be faithful to it and God tells us why. But we must study and receive this as a part of the glorious Good News of the Gospel. Here’s why...

Eyes that Do Not See (vv1-9) – In the midst of this call to renew covenant with Yahweh, Moses again *reviews* the mighty acts of God which they have seen with their own eyes: the great wonders against Pharaoh (vv2-3), clothes that did not wear out and *bread* that did not run out (vv5-6), amazing military victories against giants (vv7-8). We often wonder at the thick-headedness of the Israelites in turning away from the God of these miracles; we think we are different. The point is, however, that we all turn away from this God when *God does not give us* internal, spiritual eyes to see (v4). Why does one brother turn to God and the other refuse? The difference is not between them, but what God has done (Rom 9:10-11).

You All Stand before God (vv10-15) – He makes this covenant with Israel, the sons and daughters of those He made covenant with at Sinai, because this is the nature of God’s covenants. This renewal is with the children, and with the children’s children, even those who have not yet come (Deut 7:9). It is worth a pause to remember how important a covenant renewal service is for you and for generations to come – but of course, this takes eyes of faith.

Filthy Idolatry and Eyes that Will Not See (vv16-19) – There is a charge in the covenant renewal to stay away from idols (1 John 5:21) and Moses reminds them of the detestable and filthy idols and idolatrous practices in Egypt and in the lands they had conquered. But the warning to covenant members is that filthiness can be attractive (v18) and leads to a self-justification where a man blesses himself because he is still with the covenant people even though he is living in accursed practices (v19). While covenant renewal is corporate as God’s people, individual lives matter – which means how you are living matters. Paul warned that “*a little leaven leavens the whole lump*” (1 Cor 5:6). We all remain sinners, but those who are walking in the light walk as forgiven and *repenting* sinners.

“A Root Bearing Bitterness or Wormwood” – Idolatry, envy, and bitterness all go together in the Scriptures. They are connected. Heb 12:14-17 helps shed light on this: avoid bitterness, seek peace with all men, and be holy. Without holiness no man will see God. Like Esau, the nation of Israel would sell her birthright for a pot of stew. In Acts 8:23, Simon Magus wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit for money and was rebuked for his poison of bitterness. A profession of faith without repentance is damnable.

The Full Brunt of the Law When Eyes Do Not See (vv20-28) – God strikes that hypocrite with all the curses of Deuteronomy (vv20-21) and the land with him (v22). Moses warns that the devastation will be such that future generations will look back with wonder and will see that Yahweh, in His anger over this people, brought the curses upon them and then uprooted and cast them away (vv23-28). Of course, this is just what happened to Israel.

This is a “Problem” – God calls for faith and obedience. Then He blinds the eyes of some. Then He is angered by their blind rebellion and brings down His full curses upon them.

The Secret Things Which Eyes Cannot See (v29) – If we preach the Gospel in light of the full, exhaustive sovereignty of God in everything including election, we will (as Paul did) hear this charge, “*Isn’t God unjust? Who does He think He is anyway?*” (Rom 9:14). Most of the modern evangelical world does not have to deal with this charge because they do not preach the Gospel of an exhaustively sovereign God.

God blesses the obedience of faith, and even that obedience and that faith is the blessing of God – and every honest forgiven sinner nods in humble and thankful agreement. But God also curses stiff-necked rebellion and unbelief, and even that stiff-neckedness and that rebellion is a curse from God – and that rubs us wrong.

Paul quotes from this chapter, v4, in Rom 11:8 (along with Isaiah 29:10). God had preserved a remnant for Himself, even when it looked like He had not. He then promises glorious results from His sovereign work (Rom 11:11-12, 25-26). And we learn from this that while the secret things belong to God, it does not follow that we are to live as fatalists. For the things revealed belong to us and to our children – and we are commanded to stand on them in faith – a victorious, optimistic faith.

One example: You have an unbelieving friend. You can either become an amateur theologian, stewing over whether or not God has the “right” to elect that friend. Or, you can believe God’s promises of His exhaustive sovereignty and see that He put YOU in your friend’s life for a reason. You live overflowing in the blessings of God, you pray (knowing that God works through prayer), you live and look for times to share the Gospel – believing God is of course in it all (Rom 11:33-36).