

## Bible Passage

### Deuteronomy 29:1-15

These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.

<sup>2</sup> And Moses summoned 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, <sup>3</sup> the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. <sup>4</sup> But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. <sup>5</sup> I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. <sup>6</sup> You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God. <sup>7</sup> And when you came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle, but we defeated them. <sup>8</sup> We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. <sup>9</sup> Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

<sup>10</sup> “You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, <sup>11</sup> your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, <sup>12</sup> so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today, <sup>13</sup> that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. <sup>14</sup> It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, <sup>15</sup> but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.

## Outline

### Introduction:

- Context: Discuss the modern context of comparison in the era of social media.
- Concept of Grace: Introduce how grace plays a role in our daily lives and faith journey.

### 1. Persistent Grace Despite Repeated Failures

- God’s grace remains steadfast despite constant failures and ingratitude.
  - The story of the Israelites in the wilderness as a metaphor for our lives.
  - The Israelites' lack of gratitude and constant complaints.

### 2. The Renewed Covenant

- The significance of God renewing His covenant with His people.
  - The renewal of the covenant in Deuteronomy 29.
  - God's commitment to His people despite their idolatry and complaints.
  - Embrace the renewed covenant and reaffirm commitment to God.

### 3. God's Unfair Grace

- God’s grace is about His generosity, not human concepts of fairness.
  - The parable of the vineyard workers from Matthew 20.

- Contrast between God's grace and human fairness.
- Accept the 'unfairness' of God's grace and extend it to others.

**Conclusion:**

- Summarize the discussions on grace, renewal, and fairness.
- Reflection: Encourage self-reflection on perceptions of grace and fairness.
- Call to Action: Live as true children of God, responding joyfully to His call.

**Notes**

In today's digitized era, where social media reigns supreme, it's easy to fall into the comparison trap. This topic isn't new to my blog, but it's increasingly relevant as our lives become more intertwined with online personas. The idea that 'comparison is the thief of joy' resonates deeply, especially when considering the impact on future generations, including my own children. Scrolling through Instagram or other social platforms, it's common to feel left out or inferior. Everyone seems to be having the perfect holiday, flaunting joyful families, and showcasing enviable lifestyles. This endless comparison can lead to a sense of inadequacy, questioning whether what we have is enough to make us happy. It's not just social media; our real-life interactions are also rife with comparisons. Observing others' relationships can trigger a sense of longing or dissatisfaction with our own. We might wish our partners or children behaved more like those we admire, overlooking the uniqueness of our own relationships. Reflecting on my childhood, I recall the frustration of being compared to others. Being pointed out as a model for others to emulate brought unwanted attention and bullying. It taught me that each individual is unique, and such comparisons are often unhelpful and unfair.

The story of the Israelites in the wilderness serves as a powerful metaphor for the dangers of comparison. Despite being freed from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites grumbled and yearned for their past life, blinded by nostalgia and failing to appreciate

their current freedom. This discontent and comparison led to a lack of gratitude and faith, which angered God. The Israelites' constant comparisons and complaints showed a rejection of God's plan. They failed to recognize the blessings and guidance provided during their journey. This led to dire consequences, including God's threat to disinherit them, only averted by Moses' intercession. This historical reflection teaches us the importance of appreciating our unique paths and the dangers of comparing our lives to others'. It highlights the value of contentment and gratitude for what we have, rather than longing for what we perceive others to possess.

In reflecting on the story of the Israelites, we find profound lessons about gratitude, perception, and the nature of grace. Their experiences, particularly in the wilderness for 40 years, offer insights that are relevant to our modern lives, especially in how we perceive our circumstances and the grace we receive. Imagine wearing the same clothes or eating the same food every day for years. It's natural to feel frustrated or dissatisfied. The Israelites, during their 40-year journey, experienced this monotony. Yet, they overlooked a crucial aspect: their clothes didn't wear out, and their basic needs were met miraculously. This was a clear sign of God's grace, but they failed to recognize it, focusing instead on what they lacked.

Despite their constant grumbling and idolatry, including the incident of the golden calf, God chose to renew His covenant with the Israelites. This act of renewal in Deuteronomy 29 is a powerful testament to God's persistent grace. Even when they sought other leaders or yearned for their past in Egypt, God

remained steadfast, offering them a renewed relationship and the promise of His continual guidance and blessings.

The idea of fairness often permeates our thoughts, especially when we compare our lives to others. The parable in Matthew 20 about the vineyard workers highlights this. The workers who labored all day received the same pay as those who worked only an hour, leading to grumbling and feelings of injustice. This story underscores a fundamental truth about grace: it is not about fairness or equality. It's about the generosity and sovereignty of the giver. In today's world, where comparison is rampant, this lesson is particularly poignant. We often equate our efforts with deserving more, failing to see the inherent grace in what we already have. The Israelites' story and the parable of the vineyard workers remind us that grace is a gift, not something earned or deserved.

The narratives of the laborers in the vineyard and the prodigal son offer profound insights into the nature of grace and our response to it. These parables, along with the story of the Israelites, teach us about the dynamics of grace, fairness, and our relationship with God. In this story, workers hired at different times of the day receive the same wage, a denarius. This equal payment, despite unequal hours of labor, illustrates a key aspect of grace – it's not about fairness or what we believe we deserve. The vineyard owner's generosity reflects God's mercy and grace towards us, irrespective of our 'working hours' in His service. The parable of the prodigal son further underscores this idea. The father's celebration of the wayward son's return is a picture of God's joy over our repentance and return to Him. The older

brother's resentment highlights a common human tendency to equate our efforts with deserving more grace or blessings.

The Israelites, during their wilderness journey, failed to recognize the grace in their mundane reality – their clothes didn't wear out, and their basic needs were met. They craved the familiar comforts of Egypt, forgetting that their true blessing was in being chosen as God's people, not in material benefits. Our culture often promotes a transactional view of relationships, including our relationship with God. We tend to think that our diligent service or adherence to religious duties should result in greater blessings or answers to prayers. However, the essence of grace defies this transactional nature; it is a gift, unearned and often unequal.

Responsibility in faith isn't about earning more from God but about understanding our identity as His children. Mature Christians recognize that their actions stem not from a desire for reward but from a deep sense of belonging to God. This understanding leads to a genuine, heartfelt response to God's call, irrespective of the perceived benefits.

These biblical stories invite us to reflect on our own perceptions of grace and fairness. Are we like the vineyard workers or the older brother, measuring our worth and God's generosity in human terms of fairness? Or can we embrace the profound truth that God's grace is indeed unfair, bestowed out of love rather than earned by merit? In understanding this, we find the freedom to live as true children of God, responding to His call with joy and gratitude, not out of obligation or expectation of reward.