

Deuteronomy 9:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

Analysis

Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people. God's omniscience penetrates the people's external compliance to reveal their internal rebellion - a stiff neck metaphorically represents stubborn unwillingness to submit to authority.

The agricultural metaphor derives from ox training - a stiff-necked ox refuses the yoke, resisting guidance and direction. Israel similarly resists God's governance, refusing to bend their will to His covenant requirements. This stubbornness is not mere ignorance but willful defiance of known truth.

God's statement I have seen this people emphasizes divine observation. Though Moses cannot simultaneously be on the mountain and observe the camp, God sees all. His evaluation of Israel's character comes from comprehensive knowledge of their hearts, not just their outward actions.

Reformed theology recognizes this stiff-necked stubbornness as manifestation of total depravity - humanity's fundamental rebellion against divine authority. Only God's sovereign grace can break human stubbornness and produce a willing, obedient heart.

Historical Context

The stiff-necked characterization would recur throughout Israel's history. Despite witnessing unprecedented miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea, seeing God's glory on Sinai, and receiving divine provision in the wilderness, Israel repeatedly rebelled against God's leadership.

This pattern demonstrates that external religious privilege does not guarantee internal spiritual transformation.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life are you tempted to be 'stiff-necked' toward God's will?
2. How does recognizing our natural stubbornness humble us and drive us to depend on God's grace?
3. What does it mean that God sees not just our actions but the attitudes of our hearts?
4. How does the Holy Spirit work to soften hard hearts and produce willing obedience?
5. Why do people often resist God's authority even when they know His way is best?

Interlinear Text

לֹא־מֵרָאִתְּ	יְהוָה	אֵלַי	לֹא־מֵרָאִתְּ	כִּי־רָאִיתִי	אֶת־	עַם־
spake	Furthermore the LORD	H413	spake	I have seen	H853	people
H559	H3068		H559	H7200		H5971
הִנֵּה־הִנֵּה	וְהִנֵּה־	עַם־	קִשָּׁה	עַל־כֶּךָ	הוּא־	
H2088	H2009	people	H7186	and behold it is a stiffnecked	H1931	
	H5971			H6203		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 10:16 (Parallel theme): Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Deuteronomy 9:6 (References Lord): Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.

Deuteronomy 31:27 (References Lord): For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?

2 Kings 17:14 (References Lord): Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.