

October 14, 2018
Deuteronomy 5:22-33

Chuck Swindoll writes:

Last fall one day at the church, I spotted a visiting gentleman who was shaking hands with a half-dozen folks he'd never met before. Then he looked at me, and with a grin and a twinkle, he whipped out his hand. It was a hand you could strike a match on, toughened by decades of rugged toil.

"You look like a man who enjoys life. What do you do for a living?" I asked.

"Me? Well, I'm a farmer from back in the Midwest."

"Really? I guess I'm not surprised, since you've got hands like a tractor tire."

He laughed . . . asked me a couple of insightful questions, then told me about his plans for traveling on his own.

"What did you do last week?" I asked.

His answer stunned me. "Last week I finished harvesting 90,000 bushels of corn," he said with a smile.

I then blurted out, "Ninety thousand! How old are you, my friend?"

He didn't seem at all hesitant or embarrassed by my question. "I'm just a couple months shy o' 90." He laughed again as I shook my head.

He had lived through four wars, the Great Depression, sixteen presidents, ninety Midwest winters, who knows how many personal hardships, and he was still taking life by the throat. I had to ask him the secret of his long and productive life. "Hard work and integrity" was his quick reply.

As we parted company, he looked back over his shoulder and added, "Don't take it easy, young feller. Stay at it!"

The Bible is filled with folks who refused to take it easy. Remember our friend Caleb, who, at age 85, attacked the Anakim in the hill country and successfully drove them out ([Josh. 14](#))? Or Abraham, who had a baby (well, actually Sarah did) when he was "in his old age" . . . he was 100, she was 90 ([Gen. 21](#))? Or Noah or Moses or Samuel or Anna, the 84-year-old prophetess . . . significant people, all.

Age means zilch. Wrinkles, gray hair, and spots on your hands, less than zilch. If God chooses to leave you on this old earth, great. If He makes it possible for you to step aside from your work and move on to new vistas with fresh challenges, that's also great.

And whatever else you do, don't take it easy!

"No disease is more lethal than the boredom that follows retirement" (Norman Cousins).

Age means zilch. Wrinkles and gray hair, less than zilch. If God chooses to leave you on this old earth, great.¹

¹ <http://www.insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/don't-take-it-easy>

Moses intercedes for the people's fears

Sections and verses:

- I. Verses 22-27: The people's response
- II. Verses 28-33: The Lord's Response

Detailed Observation, applications and other sources:

- I. Verses 22-27: The people's response

²² "These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.²³ And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. ²⁴ You said, 'Behold, the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. ²⁵ Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer, then we will die. ²⁶ For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?²⁷ Go near and hear all that the Lord our God says; then speak to us all that the Lord our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it.'

- a. Moses has just finished giving the ten commandments a second time.
- b. This is Moses' second speech/sermon in Deuteronomy.
- c. Verse 22 begins with these words the Lord spoke.
- d. The previous section is composed of the words the Lord spoke.
- e. It says "to all the assembly." This was spoken to all the gathering of Israel.
- f. Then it tells us where they were gathered.
- g. From the mountain. This would be Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb.
 - i. The Lord spoke out of the midst of fire
 - ii. Of the cloud
 - iii. Of the thick gloom
 - iv. With a great voice
 1. This makes us think about the great power and might of God.
 2. As we will see in the following verses the Israelites were amazed with how mighty and great God is. The Israelites were brought back to the reality of who they are versus who God is. We also need that reality check. Or, at least I do.
- h. The Lord did not add any more to these words.
 - i. The ten commandments were complete.
 - ii. The ESV Study Bible adds: *Each of the two tablets of stone probably contained the full Ten Commandments, following ancient Near Eastern treaty*

practice. Both copies were later placed inside the ark of the covenant. The remainder of Israel's law was written by Moses in a book and kept beside the ark ([31:24–26](#)).

- i. The Lord wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to Moses.
 - i. The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary adds:
 - ii. *The use of two tablets probably indicates that Moses was given two copies, not that some of the commandments were on one tablet and some on the other. The fact that they were stone suggests a larger size than clay tablets would have been, though inscribed stone tablets such as the Gezer calendar were small enough to fit in the palm of the hand. The Egyptian practice of this period was to use flakes of stone chipped from rocks. Inscription on front and back was not unusual. When the writing reached the bottom of one side, the scribe would often continue around the bottom edge and move onto the second side. Even flakes that fit in the palm of the hand could contain fifteen to twenty lines.*²
- j. The New American Commentary Adds: *In order to reinforce the idea that he was simply repeating (even though not exactly) the covenant text of the Sinai revelation, Moses harked back to that time and place once more. So that there was no misunderstanding, he referred to the commandments just given as the “words” (v. 22), the same term used in Exod 20:1 and 24:3. He further defined them as having come in a loud voice from the mountain and out of fire, cloud, and darkness (v. 22; cf. Exod 19:16–19; 24:16–18; Deut 4:11–14, 33, 36; 5:2–5). Finally, all that is in view here is the Decalogue itself, for the Lord “**added nothing more**” than what was contained on the two tablets.*⁶⁴³
- k. Verse 23: the people were now confronted with the greatness of God.
- l. They sent their elders to Moses.
- m. Verse 24: we now see the people response:
 - i. The Lord, our God has shown us
 - ii. His glory and
 - iii. His greatness
 - iv. We have heard His voice from the mist of the fire
 - v. We have seen today that God speaks with man and yet he lives.
 1. They are amazed by God's greatness and this is the third time that is emphasized.
 2. Verses 22, 23 and 24 emphasize God's greatness and power.
- n. The New American Commentary adds: *The narrative continues to rehearse the first giving of the law, drawing attention to its immediate aftermath when Moses came down from the mountain to present the tablets and to assuage the fears of the terror-stricken assembly that had witnessed the glorious theophany from afar (cf. Exod*

² Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 5:22.

⁶⁴ Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 323.

³ Eugene H. Merrill, [Deuteronomy](#), vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 158.

20:18–21).⁶⁵ Though the Deuteronomy version is much more expansive than that of Exodus, the same scene is in mind as the reference to the fear of death in both places makes clear.⁴

- o. The Moody Bible Commentary gives insight: A popular notion (Jdg 13:22) was that if anyone saw God he or she would immediately die (although it was not the case with Jacob in Gn 32:30 and later with Moses in Ex 33:11). The nation saw that Moses was still alive after his encounter with God. Still they were not convinced that they would survive seeing God, so they volunteered Moses to be the intermediary, promising that they would obey whatever he received from God.⁵
- p. Verse 25:
- q. Question: why should we die?
- r. They are so very amazed by God's greatness that they are afraid.
- s. They are afraid if they hear the voice of the Lord longer they will die.
- t. Verse 26: there is a question with a negative answer expected.
- u. Archaeological Study Bible:
 - a. In this verse it is made clear that when covenants were renewed the former obligations were repeated and brought up to date. Thus chapters 5–11 review the Decalogue with its primary obligation of fidelity to Yahweh, while chapters 12–26 in considerable measure renew the stipulations of the Book of the Covenant (Ex 21–33) and other Sinaitic legislation, adapting where necessary to the new conditions awaiting Israel in Canaan. In chapters 27–30 directions were first given for the future and final act in this covenant renewal to be conducted by Joshua in Canaan (ch. 27). Moses then pronounced the blessings and curses as reasons for Israel's immediate ratification of the covenant, but also as a prophecy of Israel's future down to its ultimate exile and restoration (chs. 28–30). In chapters 31–34 preparations were made for the continuity of leadership through the succession of Joshua and for the continuing confrontation of Israel with the way of the covenant by periodic reading of the covenant document, which was to be deposited in the sanctuary, as well as by a prophetic song of covenant witness (chs. 31–32). The book ends with the final blessings and the death of Moses (chs. 33–34).
 - b. Verse 27: they ask that Moses mediates.

II. Verses 28-33: The Lord's Response

²⁸ "The Lord heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. ²⁹ Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!³⁰ Go, say to them, "Return to your tents."³¹ But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess.'³² So you shall observe to do just as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ You shall walk in all the

⁶⁵ The two passages (Exod 20:18–21; Deut 5:25–27) are explicitly linked by Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 87.

⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 158.

⁵ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 10632-10635). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess.

- a. The Moody Bible Commentary: *The Lord was pleased with the people's response to hear and obey (do) His word, and He hoped that this same attitude of reverence and submission would always be characteristic of them (vv. 28-29). After they were dismissed to their tents, Moses was to remain with God and receive additional legislation for the people to observe ... in the land (v. 31). With a rhetorical flourish, Moses associated the nation's obedience with a long prosperous stay in the land they were to possess.*
- b. The subject matter at the end of chap. 5 dovetails with the beginning of chap. 6 as shown in the chiasm to follow. All pivot on the injunction in v. 32, you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left, summarizing the nation's need for strict obedience to God's commandments.
- c. **Moses' purpose of structuring this passage in this way is to clearly define these verses as a unit (in this case it crosses a chapter division!) and to focus on the outside verbal injunction (to "hear/listen" 5:27/6:3) and the pivot in the middle where the nation was not to turn aside to the right or to the left (5:32).** To live long in the land (5:31, 33) the nation was to listen to (hear, 5:27; 6:3) God's commandments (5:29; 6:1) by fearing (reverencing; 5:29; 6:2) Him and not deviating (5:32) in their obedience.
- d. Structure of Deuteronomy 5:27–6:3 The point of a chiasmic structure is to draw insight to the middle section "F"
 1. A hear (Hb. shema) ... speaks (Hb. dabar) to you (5:27)
 2. B fear ... keep all My commandments ... sons (5:29)
 3. C commandments and the statutes and the judgments ... teach (5:31)
 4. D land which I give them to possess (5:31)
 5. E you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you (5:32)
 6. F you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left (5:32)
 7. E' You shall walk in the way which the LORD your God has commanded you (5:33)
 8. D' land which you will possess (5:33)
 9. C' commandment, the statutes and the judgments ...teach (6:1)
 10. B' son ... fear ... keep ... His commandments (6:2)
 11. A' listen (Hb. shema) ... promised (Hb. dabar) you (6:3)⁶
- e. Verse 28, The Lord heard
 - i. Remember that the Lord hears all things.
 - ii. The Lord knew what was going on.
- f. The Lord is pleased with what they have said. They have done well.
- g. Verse 29:

⁶ . The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 10656-10659). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- h. This is neat: it seems as though we are getting a glimpse of God's emotions.
 - i. God knows what is best for them.
 - ii. God knows that it is best that they respond to Him this way all the time.
 - iii. God knows that they have not responded to Him that way and will not continue to respond that way.
 - iv. God wants them to have this kind of heart all the time, so that they will:
 - 1. Fear Him
 - 2. Keep all His commandments
 - a. This will be good
 - b. for them and
 - c. Their sons
 - d. forever
- i. verse 30: simple command: tell them to return to their tents.
- j. Verse 31: now we see the direction for Moses as the mediator.
- k. God will speak to him all of the:
 - i. Commandments:
 - ii. Statutes
 - iii. Judgments
- l. We have seen these words before.
- m. God tells Moses, Moses passes them on to the people and they observe them in the land they possess.
- n. Verse 32: observe just as the Lord commanded you, do not stray...
- o. Verse 33:
- p. Walk as the Lord commands.
- q. The ESV Study Bible adds: not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. God's way is likened to a straight path. See also [2:27](#); [17:11, 20](#); [28:14](#). walk in all the way. See also [8:6](#); [9:16](#); [10:12](#); [11:22](#); [19:9](#); [26:17](#); [28:9](#); [30:16](#); [31:29](#).
- r. Verse 33 seems to be re-emphasizing verse 32
- s. If they do this then they will live and it will be well with them, their days will be long.
- t. It is always better to obey the Lord.