

INTRODUCTION TO DEUT. CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we have the second edition of the ten commandments.

I. The general intent of them; they were in the nature of a covenant between God and Israel, #De 5:1-5.

II. The particular precepts are repeated (#De 5:6-21), with the double delivery of them, both by word and writing, #De 5:22.

III. The settling of the correspondence thenceforward between God and Israel, by the mediation and ministry of Moses.

1. It was Israel's humble petition that it might be so, #De 5:23-27.

2. It was God's gracious grant that it should be so, #De 5:28-31. And hence he infers the obligation they were under to obedience, #De 5:32,33.

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 5.

Here,

1. Moses summons the assembly. He *called all Israel*; not only the elders, but, it is likely, as many of the people as could come within hearing, #De 5:1. The greatest of them were not above God's command, nor the meanest of them below his cognizance; but they were all bound to do.

2. He demands attention:

"Hear, O Israel; hear and heed, hear and remember, hear, that you may learn, and keep, and do; else your hearing is to no purpose."

When we hear the word of God we must set ourselves to learn it, that we may have it ready to us upon all occasions, and what we have learned we must put in practice, for that is the end of hearing and learning; not to fill our heads with notions, or our mouths with talk, but to rectify and direct our affections and conversations.

3. He refers them to the covenant made with them in Horeb, as that which they must govern themselves by. See the wonderful condescension of divine grace in turning the command into a covenant, that we might be the more strongly bound to obedience by our own consent and the more encouraged in it by the divine promise, both which are supposed in the covenant. The promises and threatenings annexed to some of the precepts, as to the second, third, and fifth, make them amount to a covenant. Observe,

(1.) The parties to this covenant. God made it, *not with our fathers*, not with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to them God gave the *covenant of circumcision* (#Ac 7:8), but not that of the ten commandments. The light of divine revelation shone gradually, and the children were made to know more of God's mind than their fathers had done.

"The covenant was made with us, or our immediate parents that represented us, before Mount Sinai, and transacted for us."

(2.) The publication of this covenant. God himself did, as it were, read the articles to

them (**#De 5:4**): He *talked with you face to face; word to word*, so the Chaldee. Not in dark visions, as of old he spoke to the fathers (**#Job 4:12,13**), but openly and clearly, and so that all the thousands of Israel might hear and understand. He spoke to them, and then received the answer they returned to him: thus was it transacted *face to face*.

(3.) The mediator of the covenant: *Moses stood between God and them*, at the foot of the mount (**#De 5:5**), and carried messages between them both for the settling of the preliminaries (Exodus 19) and for the exchanging of the ratifications, Exodus 24. Herein Moses was a type of Christ, who *stands between God and man, to show us the word of the Lord*, a blessed days-man, that has laid his hand upon us both, so that we may both hear from God and speak to him without trembling.

Ver. 6. thru Ver. 22.

Here is the repetition of the ten commandments, in which observe,

1. Though they had been spoken before, and written, yet they are again rehearsed; for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough to keep the word of God in our minds and to preserve and renew the impressions of it. We have need to have the same things often inculcated upon us. See **#Php 3:1**.
2. There is some variation here from that record (Exod. 20), as there is between the Lord's prayer as it is in Matt. 6 and as it is Luke 11. In both it is more necessary that we tie ourselves to the things than to the words unalterably.
3. The most considerable variation is in the fourth commandment. In Exod. 20 the reason annexed is taken from the creation of the world; here it is taken from their deliverance out of Egypt, because that was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, in remembrance of which the Christian sabbath was to be observed: *Remember that thou wast a servant, and God brought thee out*, **#De 5:15**. And Therefore,

(1.)

"It is fit that thy servants should be favoured by the sabbath-rest; for thou knowest the heart of a servant, and how welcome one day's ease will be after six days' labour."

(2.)

"It is fit that thy God should be honoured by the sabbath-work, and the religious services of the day, in consideration of the great things he has done for thee."

In the resurrection of Christ we were brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, *with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm*; therefore, by the gospel-edition of the law, we are directed to observe the first day of the week, in remembrance of that glorious work of power and grace.

4. It is added in the fifth commandment, *That it may go well with thee*, which addition the apostle quotes, and puts first (**#Eph 6:3**), *that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long*. If there be instances of some that have been very dutiful to their parents, and yet have not lived long upon earth, we may reconcile it to the promise by this explication of it, Whether they live long or no, it shall go well with them, either in this world or in a better. See **#Ec 8:12**.

5. The last five commandments are connected or coupled together, which they are not in Exodus: *Neither shalt thou commit adultery, neither shalt thou steal, &c.*, which intimate that God's commands are all of a piece: the same authority that obliges us to one obliges us to another; and we must not be partial in the law, but have respect to all God's commandments, for he that *offends in one point is guilty of all*, #Jas 2:10,11.

6. That these commandments were given with a great deal of awful solemnity, #De 5:22.

(1.) They were spoken with a *great voice out of the fire, and thick darkness*. That was a dispensation of terror, designed to make the gospel of grace the more welcome, and to be a specimen of the terrors of the judgment-day, #Ps 50:3,4.

(2.) *He added no more*. What other laws he gave them were sent by Moses, but no more were spoken in the same manner that the ten commandments were. *He added no more*, therefore we must not add: the law of the Lord is perfect.

(3.) *He wrote them in two tables of stone*, that they might be preserved from corruption, and might be transmitted pure and entire to posterity, for whose use they were intended, as well as for the present generation. These being the heads of the covenant, the chest in which the written tables were deposited was called the *ark of the covenant*. See #Re 11:19.

Ver. 23. thru Ver. 33.

Here,

I. Moses reminds them of the agreement of both the parties that were now treating, in the mediation of Moses.

1. Here is the consternation that the people were put into by that extreme terror with which the law was given. They owned that they could not bear it any more:

"This great fire will consume us; this dreadful voice will be fatal to us; we shall certainly die if we hear it any more,"

#De 5:25. They wondered that they were not already struck dead with it, and took it for an extraordinary instance of the divine power and goodness, not only that they were thus spoken to, but that they were enabled to bear it. For *who ever heard the voice of the living God, as we have, and lived?* God's appearances have always been terrible to man, ever since the fall: but Christ, having taken away sin, invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

2. Their earnest request that God would henceforward speak to them by Moses, with a promise that they would hear what he said as from God himself, and do it, #De 5:27. It seems by this,

(1.) That they expected to receive further commands from God and were willing to hear more from him.

(2.) That they thought Moses able to bear those discoveries of the divine glory which they by reason of guilt were sensible of their inability to stand up under. They believed him to be a favourite of Heaven, and also one that would be faithful to them; yet at other times they murmured at him, and but a little before this were ready to stone him, #Ex 17:4. See how men's convictions correct their passions.

(3.) That now they were in a good mind, under the strong convictions of the word they heard. Many have their consciences startled by the law that have them not purified; fair promises are extorted from them, but no good principles fixed and rooted in them.

3. God's approbation of their request.

(1.) He commends what they said, **#De 5:28**. They spoke it to Moses, but God took notice of it; for there is not a word in our tongue but he knows it. He acknowledges, *They have well said*. Their owning the necessity of a mediator to deal between them and God was well said. Their desire to receive further directions from God by Moses, and their promise to observe what directions should be given them, were well said. And what is well said shall have its praise with God, and should have with us. What is good, as far as it goes, let it be commended.

(2.) He wishes they were but sincere in it: *O that there were such a heart in them!* **#De 5:29**.

[1.] Such a heart as they should have, a heart to fear God, and keep his commandments for ever. Note, The God of heaven is truly and earnestly desirous of the welfare and salvation of poor sinners. He has given abundant proof that he is so: he gives us time and space to repent, by his mercies invites us to repentance, and waits to be gracious; he has sent his Son to redeem us, published a general offer of pardon and life, promised his Spirit to those that pray for him, and has said and sworn that he has no pleasure in the ruin of sinners.

[2.] Such a heart as they now had, or one would think they had. Note, It would be well with many if there were always such a heart in them as there seems to be sometimes, when they are under conviction of sin, or the rebukes of Providence, or when they come to look death in the face: *How gracious will they be when these pangs come upon them!* O that there were always such a heart in them!

(3.) He appoints Moses to be his messenger to them, to receive the law from his mouth and to communicate it to them, **#De 5:31**. Here the matter was settled by consent of both parties that God should hence forward speak to us by men like ourselves, by Moses and the prophets, by the apostles and the evangelists, and, if we believe not these, neither should we be persuaded though God should speak to us as he did to Israel at Mount Sinai, or send expresses from heaven or hell.

ii. Hence he infers a charge to them to observe and do all that God had commanded them, **#De 5:32,33**. Seeing God had shown himself so tender of them, and so willing to consider their frame and gratify them in what they desired, and withal so ready to make the best of them,—seeing they themselves had desired to have Moses for their teacher, who was now teaching them,—and seeing they had promised so solemnly, and under the influence of so many good causes and considerations, that they would hear and do, he charges them to *walk in all the ways that God had commanded them*, assuring them that it would be highly for their advantage to do so. The only way to be happy is to be holy. *Say to the righteous, It shall be well with them.*