

Deuteronomy 31:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck—Moses's stark assessment of Israel's character. Meri (מֵרִי, 'rebellion') and oref qasheh (עֹרֵף קָשֶׁה, 'stiff neck') described stubborn, persistent resistance to God's authority. **Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD**—even with Moses's leadership and firsthand experience of miracles, rebellion persisted. **And how much more after my death?**—the rhetorical question predicted escalated rebellion without Moses's restraining influence.

Moses's honesty about Israel's character revealed both discouragement and realism. Forty years leading them through rebellions—golden calf, Korah's revolt, refusing to enter Canaan, constant grumbling—proved their tendency toward faithlessness. Yet Moses continued interceding and instructing, modeling perseverance in ministry despite discouraging results. Paul later expressed similar frustration (Galatians 4:19-20), showing that spiritual leadership often involves persistent investment despite repeated disappointment. The comfort: ultimate success depends on God's faithfulness, not human responsiveness.

Historical Context

Spoken circa 1406 BC in Moses's final address to Israel's elders. The 'stiff neck' metaphor derived from oxen who resist the yoke—rebellious against authority and direction. Throughout the wilderness, Israel rebelled repeatedly despite witnessing

unprecedented miracles (Red Sea crossing, manna, water from rocks, Sinai theophany). The golden calf incident (Exodus 32) epitomized their stiff-necked rebellion—making an idol while God was giving Moses the Ten Commandments. Moses's prediction proved accurate: the books of Judges and Kings chronicle continual apostasy punctuated by brief reforms.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How should Christian leaders persevere in ministry when those they serve persistently resist and rebel?
2. What's the difference between acknowledging realistic assessments of human depravity versus cynical despair?
3. How does God's faithfulness despite human rebellion encourage persistence in evangelism and discipleship?

Interlinear Text

הָיָה H3588	אֲנִי H595	יָדַעְתִּי H3045	אֶת H853	מְרִיבָה H4805	וְאֶת H853	עַרְפָּךְ H6203	הַקֶּשֶׁה H7186	וְהָיָה H2005
		For I know		thy rebellion		neck	and thy stiff	
בְּעוֹדָי H5750		חַי H2416		עִמָּךְ H5973		הַיּוֹם H3117		
		behold while I am yet alive				with you this day		
	מִמָּרְיָם H4784		עִם H5973	הַיְיָ H1961	וְאֵלֹהֵי H3068	יִצְחָק H637	בְּיָמָיו H3588	
		ye have been rebellious			against the LORD			
	וְכַךְ H310		אֲחֵר H4194	מֵמוֹתַי H4194				
		and how much more after		my death				

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:20 (Parallel theme): And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.

Deuteronomy 9:24 (References Lord): Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.