

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 (מִרְיָה, 'rebellion') and oref qasheh (עָרֶף 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

ה	פְּקַשׁ	ה	עֲרָפָה	וְ	עֲרָפָה	וְ	מְרִיב	וְ	אַת	וְ	עֲתִי	וְ	אָנָכִי	וְ	H3588
	For I know		thy rebellion		neck		and thy stiff		H853		H3045		H4805		H2005

בָּעֵדְךָ פִּי עִ שְׁפַטְךָ מִ בְּ יָמֶיךָ
H5750 behold while I am yet alive H5973 with you this day
H2416

פָּרָא	הַיְתָם	עִם	יְהִוָּה	בְּאַרְצָה	מִמֶּרְאֶת	יְמִינְךָ
H3588	H5973	H1961	against the LORD	H637	H4784	ye have been rebellious

אַכְרֵי מָותִין
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.

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