

**Deut. 31:1 ¶ And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.**

**Deut. 31:2 And he said unto them, I *am* an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.**

Moses tells the people that he is coming to the end of his ministry. He is now 120 years old and has been serving God faithfully for 40 years. Again he acknowledges publicly that YHWH has forbidden him to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land; this time, however, he does not place the blame on the people of Israel. In chapter 34 it is noted that Moses at age 120 was still as physically fit as ever.

**Deuteronomy 34:7 “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”**

Chuck Smith made a beautiful application to law and grace. “It is interesting to me that Moses who is representing the law could only bring them to the Promised Land. He could not take them in. The law cannot take you into the full blessings of God. Grace must do that. So the law could only bring them to the border of the land. Now it's up to Joshua to take them in. And so, it's typical of our lives: the law cannot bring you into that glorious rich life in the Spirit. It can only bring you to it, but by grace and faith we must enter in.”

**Deut. 31:3 The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, *and* he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: *and* Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.**

**Deut. 31:4 And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed.**

**Deut. 31:5 And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.**

Moses is reminding the people that his presence is not what is important. What is important is that YHWH, the God of Israel, will go *before* them and destroy the nations from *before* them. (The Hebrew for *possess* actually means to dispossess, to ruin/destroy/expel and take possession.) Just as He has led them and provided for them these past 40 years, God will continue to lead them and provide for them as they continue to follow Him in faith and obedience. Moses publicly declares Joshua as God's choice to replace them as God's human authority figure before Him.

This is a very important truth for all who call themselves Christian to embrace. When we follow God's leading in our lives, we can be confident of His empowerment to have success where He leads. When we choose to go off on our own, we position ourselves for defeat, disappointment and sorrow.

The defeat of Sihon and Og is recorded in Numbers 21. The lands of these kingdoms were given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh.

**Numbers 32:33 “And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of**

Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about.”

**Deut. 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.**

These words of encouragement from Moses are very similar to the words of Joshua, which is quite natural since Joshua served as his personal assistant.

Joshua 1:9 “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

It was interesting when I looked at the Hebrew for be “strong”; it stated “to fasten upon...to seize...conquer...” The Hebrew for “courage” stated “to be alert...steadfastly minded...increase.” These meanings actually tie in to the last half of this verse. They are to fasten upon the truth with steadfast intent that God is with them and will not abandon them as they determine to follow Him in obedience. That stubborn perseverance in faith will result in victory that will in turn increase their faith.

The truth that victory in faith increases faith is a wonderful motivation for seeking God’s direction in the choices we make in life. The more we seek His leadership and choose to step out in faith in obedience, the more opportunity we get for growth in faith as we watch Him deliver on His promises. The key is to remember not to box God in according to our expectations. If we will persevere in faith, He will always “show up” in His perfect time in response to that faith.

**Deut. 31:7 And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.**

**Deut. 31:8 And the LORD, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.**

At this point Moses calls Joshua to the forefront to publicly pass the mantle of leadership to him. He publicly urges Joshua to persevere in faith and obedience to God as he leads the people in taking possession of the Promised Land, the land YHWH promised Abraham that He would give to his descendants through Isaac. He directs toward Joshua the words of encouragement that he had just spoken to the people as a whole. The truth of that directive was important to the people, but it was doubly important to their God-appointed leader.

The Hebrew for “inherit” makes reference to dividing and distributing the land among the tribes.

**Deut. 31:9 ¶ And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.**

The Holy Spirit is clear in establishing Moses as the vessel through whom God communicated His law to the people of Israel. He delivered a written copy of

this law to the priests and the elders of Israel, the senior citizens who would represent the heads of the families.

**Deut. 31:10** And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of *every* seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,  
**Deut. 31:11** When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

**Deut. 31:12** Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that *is* within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:

**Deut. 31:13** And *that* their children, which have not known *any thing*, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

Moses is instructing the leaders to gather all Israel together for a public reading of this law every seven years, the year of release from debt as instructed in chapter 15, during the feast of tabernacles.

Deuteronomy 15:1-2 "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release."

This gathering was to occur at the place of God's choosing (the location of the tabernacle or temple). "All Israel" included men, women, children and any foreigners living in the land. This time of public focus on God's law was to provide ongoing instruction to the people of the content of His law and of the importance of reverencing God and showing submission to His authority through obedience. He states that this is especially important in training the children through instruction as well as example. This would not preclude the importance of continual instruction in the home as stated earlier.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

I'm especially appreciative of the principle of ongoing verse-by-verse teaching of the whole Word of God upon which Chuck Smith founded Calvary Chapel. I really believe that is why God has so blessed his ministry. Though many have gone their own way, my pastor included, in how they choose to follow this principle; those of whom I am aware do emphasize teaching the scripture book and verse; they don't fall into the trap of using only topical studies that leave the church body lacking in understanding of complete context. I personally think topical studies are wonderful for providing emphasis and for addressing specific needs in the congregation, but they shouldn't be the primary method of instruction.

2Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

**Deut. 31:14 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.**

**Deut. 31:15 And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.**

**Deut. 31:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.**

**Deut. 31:17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is not* among us?**

**Deut. 31:18 And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.**

Although Moses had already publicly declared Joshua as his successor, this section of verses begins a description of God’s public affirmation of that choice. God instructs Moses to get Joshua and bring him to the tabernacle to receive YHWH’s commission. Moses did so and YHWH appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud that stood over the door of the tabernacle. YHWH declares to Moses that his time on planet earth has come to an end. He also declares His knowledge of the fact that the people of Israel will break covenant with Him to go and worship heathen gods. In Joshua’s hearing He warns that He will forsake His people when they do that and allow evil and trouble to afflict them. He also foretells that the people will eventually recognize that their sin is responsible for their troubles. Just knowing that to be the case will not be sufficient for God to intervene on their behalf; He will “hide His face” from them.

**Deut. 31:19 Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.**

In light of God’s omniscience concerning the actions of His people, He gives Moses a song to teach Joshua and all the people of Israel. This song will serve to testify for God against the sins of the people.

It’s especially interesting to me that the LORD had Moses record this testimony as a song. I love music and remember learning most easily and retaining most readily scripture that was put to music. As a grandma, I am enjoying watching my grandchildren learn so many verses in the same way. Our worship leader at church, Clay Hecoeks, often puts the words of scripture to music and those songs

are always my favorites. This is just another one of the many ways that music can be used to our benefit.

**Deut. 31:20 For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.**

**Deut. 31:21 And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.**

God goes on to affirm that He will bring them into the Promised Land according to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This land will be continually flowing with provision for all they could need or want. Instead of gratitude, their abundance will result in their rejection of the God who has blessed them with so much. They will actually choose to break covenant with YHWH and worship false gods. As a result, they will experience evil and trouble. This song will serve as a reminder that ignorance will be no excuse. God declares that He knows what they are thinking even “now”—before they have even entered the land.

This is really a pretty amazing section of scripture. God is addressing a people to whom He has so vividly demonstrated His power and authority, yet He declares that He knows that they are going to reject Him to serve the impotent false gods of the heathen nations. I couldn't help but think of Peter's response when the Lord told him that he would deny his Savior; he declared that he would die before denying the Lord.

Matthew 26:33-35 “Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”

It's often overlooked that the other disciples made the same declaration that Peter made. It's significant to me that there is no record of similar protest from the people as you continue to read to the end of Deuteronomy.

It's a disconcerting yet at the same time comforting truth to me that God knows my thoughts. There are thoughts that come into my head sometimes that horrify me and cause me to wonder at the depth of my depravity. I've determined that these are attacks of the spiritual forces of evil that want to destroy my faith as described in Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:12 “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

I am comforted that the Lord knows my true being and that He is ever present through His Holy Spirit to empower me to confront those attacks and emerge victorious. I am comforted to know that God knows everything there is to know about me and loves me unconditionally.

Romans 8:38-39 “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Deut. 31:22 ¶ Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.**

I think the significant point in this verse is that Moses obeyed God immediately—the same day. We would do well to follow his example.

**Deut. 31:23 And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee.**

YHWH now personally instructs Joshua with the same words used by Moses. His words were both an admonition and a promise. He is encouraging Joshua to hold fast to Him in faith and obedience as He leads the people of Israel in taking possession of the Promised Land. Again, He affirms that He will be with him—and that means continually, not just some of the time.

He has commissioned us with the same promise.

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: **and, lo, I am with you alway**, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

In reading through this section one more time, it stood out to me that Joshua is identified as the son of Nun. This identification was one of tribute, I think, to the parent that instilled into his son such trust and obedience to God. I can honestly say that I am honored before the Lord to be known as the mother of Jason, Carla and Meredith Cravens.

**Deut. 31:24 And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished,**

**Deut. 31:25 That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,**

**Deut. 31:26 Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.**

**Deut. 31:27 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?**

Again we are told that Moses had put in writing all that God had commanded. He then gave the completed volume into the care of the Levites that were entrusted with the responsibility of transporting the ark of the covenant and instructed them to “put it in the side of the ark.” Virtually every other translation that I checked indicated that this meant beside or next to the ark—not inside it. Whether in the ark or beside the ark, point is that this “book of the law” was to

be as treasured and protected as the ark itself. Moses may have been the human scribe, but God through His Holy Spirit was the author. Evidently, the book was at least faithfully preserved, in spite of being totally ignored for most of the nation's existence, since it seems to surface again in the days of Josiah.

2Kings 22:3-8 "And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying, Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house....And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, **I have found the book of the law** in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it."

Again it is emphasized that this book will serve as a testimony against the people **when** they rebel against God; ignorance will not be an acceptable excuse. Moses had experienced many years of complaining and threatened rebellion as leader of God's people, and he had no problem believing that they would do so again once he was no longer on the scene.

**Deut. 31:28 Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.**

**Deut. 31:29 For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.**

Having carefully written down all of God's words to the people as God had directed him to do, Moses then calls for all the elders of the tribes and the leaders of the people to once again instruct them in God's law. He once again declares that he knows that they will rebel against God and have to suffer God's judgment because of it.

As a student of prophecy, it was interesting to me that Moses singled out the evil that the people would suffer in the "latter days" because of their wickedness; this phrase is a reference to "end times" and "remnant." Though not even Moses probably understood the significance of this prophecy, it is very clear to me anyway in hindsight. The Jewish people have suffered greatly at the hands of the nations since the fall of Jerusalem and their subsequent dispersion throughout the world. God has promised throughout scripture to preserve a remnant through whom the promises to Abraham and David will finally be fulfilled.

Isaiah 10:20 "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth."

Isaiah 11:10-11 "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea."

Jeremiah 23:3-5 "And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

Ezekiel 6:8 "Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries."

**Deut. 31:30 And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.**

Now we are told that Moses also instructed the whole congregation regarding the song he had written. The words of this song are in the next chapter.