DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 5

*The Ten Commandments*

**Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. 2 The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. 4 The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. 5 (At that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said: 6“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 7“You shall have no other gods before me. 8“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 10 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. 11“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. 12“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. 13Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. 16“Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you. 17 “You shall not murder. 18“You shall not commit adultery. 19“You shall not steal. 20“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. 21“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” 22 These are the commandments the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me. 23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. 24 And you said, “The Lord our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. 25 But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer. 26 For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? 27 Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey.” 28 The Lord heard you when you spoke to me and the Lord said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. 29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! 30 “Go, tell them to return to their tents. 31 But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.” 32 So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. 33 Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.**

**5:1** *Hear, O Israel.* See note on 4:1. (CSB)

**5:2** *covenant with us at Horeb.* See note on Ex 19:5. God’s covenant with Israel, given at Mount Horeb (Sinai) and now being confirmed, bound Israel to the Lord as their absolute Sovereign, and to his laws and regulations as their way of life. Adherence to the covenant would bring to Israel the blessings of the Lord, while breaking the covenant would bring against them the punishments described as “curses” (see, e.g., 28:15–20). Jer 31:31–34 predicted the establishing of a new covenant, which made the Sinaitic covenant obsolete (see Heb 7:22; see also Heb 8:6–13; 10:15–18 and notes). See chart on “Major Covenants in the OT”. (CSB)

**5:3** *not with our fathers … but with us.* The covenant was made with those who were present at Sinai, but since they were representatives of the nation, it was made with all succeeding generations as well. (CSB)

Given to the first generation of Israelites at Sinai, but the terms now apply to this second generation. Chem: “Before the birth of Christ no teaching was ever revealed in the church with such great miracles and testimonies as the promulgation of the Law” (*LTh* 2:354). (TLSB)

**5:4** *face to face*. The Lord spoke to them and heard their reply (4:12, 15). (TLSB)

**5:5** See vv. 23–26; Ex 20:18–21. (CSB)

**5:5** *I stood between*. Moses served as the mediator between God and His people at Sinai, carrying messages back and forth during the preparation for the covenant (Ex 19) and for the ratification (Ex 24). We see in Moses a preview of our Lord Jesus Christ, who mediates between God and us (1Tm 2:5). (TLSB)

**5:6–21** The Ten Commandments are both the basis and the heart of Israel’s relationship with the Lord. It is almost impossible to exaggerate their effect on subsequent history. They constitute the basis of moral principles throughout the Western world, and they summarize how faith in the one true God will respond to his goodness in worship and conduct (see notes on Ex 20:3–17). (CSB)

**5:6** God introduces Himself—part of a standard suzerain-vassal agreement of the ancient Near East. In these pacts, the ruler begins the agreement with a preamble (“I am the Lord your God”), followed by a historic prologue (“who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”). This verse is critical for our understanding of the covenant. These Commandments were given to people who were already called and redeemed by God in order that they might show their love for God. They were not given to sinners in order for them to achieve justification, which they had already received by faith (Gn 15:6; Rm 4). (TLSB)

**5:12** *as the Lord your God has commanded you.* Missing from the parallel verse in Exodus (20:8), this clause reminds the people of the divine origin of the Ten Commandments 40 years earlier (see vv. 15–16). (CSB)

**5:14** Text differs from Ex 20:8–11. (TLSB)

*seventh day*. Chemnitz: “God has willed that in the observances of the Sabbath there be a memorial of the article of creation … that the people may be instructed by this teaching device to pray to God and to await His blessings, and that thus faith be strengthened” (*LTh* 2:391). Tertullian: “The force of such precepts was temporary, and respected the necessity of present circumstances” (*ANF* 3:156). (TLSB)

*so that your manservant and maidservant may rest.* See note on Ex 20:10; see also v. 15. (CSB)

**5:15** *Remember.* See note on 4:10. (CSB)

*you were a slave*. Moses adds a reminder of how the Israelites are to treat their slaves on the Sabbath; both male and female slaves are given rest on each Sabbath, just as the Israelites. Chemnitz: “This manifestly pertains to the people of Israel … [who] were put in a place of rest in the land of Canaan” (*LTh* 2:389). (TLSB)

**5:16–21** The NT quotes often from this section of the Ten Commandments. (CSB)

**5:16** *Honor*. Hbr *kabed*, lit, “heavy.” Here it means “consider someone very important, prize highly.” Luther emphasizes the wider implications of this commandment: “All authority flows and is born from the authority of parents” (LC I 141). (TLSB)

*that your days may be long*. The blessings of obedience are also applied to all of the Commandments. (TLSB)

**5:20** See 19:18–19. (CSB)

**5:21** Moses weaves together the Ninth and Tenth Commandments by transposing “house” and “wife.” (TLSB)

**5:22** *spoke to all*. Chem: “God in the very act of promulgating the Law showed that He did not place the ceremonial and the civil on the same level with the Decalog.… The Lord spoke these words to the whole multitude. But with regard to the other laws God [spoke] to Moses alone” (*LTh* 2:351). (TLSB)

*commandments.* Lit. “words” (see note on Ex 20:1). (CSB)

*two stone tablets.* See note on Ex 31:18. (CSB)

**5:24** When the Israelites first heard God’s voice at Mount Sinai, they thought they would die (Ex 20:19). However, no one died in this transaction. Iren: “God the Father is shown forth through all these [operations], the Spirit indeed working, and the Son ministering, while the Father was approving, and man’s salvation being accomplished” (*ANF* 1:489). (TLSB)

**5:25–27** In this recounting of the events at Sinai, Moses recalls the fear expressed by the previous Israelite generation: that God had brought them to Mount Sinai to exterminate them. Moses served as the intermediary between God and His people (Ex 20:19). (TLSB)

**5:25** *we will die.* See notes on Ge 16:13; 32:30. (CSB)

**5:27** *We will listen and obey.* See note on Ex 19:8. (CSB)

**5:28** *They are right*. God Himself approved the Israelite nation’s request for Moses to serve as an intermediary. (TLSB)

**5:29–30** In His infinite wisdom, God commended the Israelites’ request for a mediator and for their fear and reverence toward Him. (TLSB)

**5:31** *commandment* … *statutes* … *rules*. All of God’s statutes and commands were shared exclusively with Moses. Moses then taught these regulations to God’s people. (TLSB)

**Ch 5** Moses recounts how all of the Israelites assembled at Mount Sinai to hear God present guidelines for a holy relationship with Him and with one another. Sinful men and women need an intermediary between themselves and God. Though Moses served in that capacity at Sinai, Jesus Christ fills that role in a much greater way for you and for me (1Tm 2:5–6; cf Rm 8:1–2). • Lord of mercy, in Your Law we become painfully aware that our sinful nature separates us from You. Through Christ, our Lord, draw us ever closer to You through Your Word and Sacraments. Amen. (TLSB)