

and one tribe might not encroach upon another, but throughout their generations there might remain immovable the ancient landmarks, set, not by their fathers, but by the *God of their fathers*.

3. The submission of the daughters of Zelophehad to this appointment. How could they but marry well, and to their satisfaction, when God himself directed them? They married their father's brothers' sons, v. 10. . 12. By this it appears, (1.) That the marriage of cousin-germans is not in itself unlawful, nor within the degrees prohibited, for then God would not have countenanced these marriages. But, (2.) That ordinarily it is not advisable: for if there had not been a particular reason for it, (which cannot hold in any case now, inheritances being not

disposed of as then by the special designation of Heaven,) they would not have married such near relations. The world is wide, and he that walks uprightly, will endeavour to walk surely.

*Lastly*, The conclusion of this whole book, referring to the latter part of it; *these are the judgments which the Lord commanded in the plains of Moab*; (v. 13.) these foregoing, ever since, *ch. 26.* most of which related to their settlement in Canaan, into which they were now entering. Whatever new condition God is by his providence bringing us into, we must beg of him to teach us the duty of it, and to enable us to do it, that we may do the work of the day in its day, of the place in its place.

---

AN

# E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED

## D E U T E R O N O M Y.

---

This book is a repetition of very much both of the history and of the laws contained in the three foregoing books; which repetition Moses delivered to Israel, (both by word of mouth, that it might affect, and by writing, that it might abide,) a little before his death. There is no new history in it but that of the death of Moses in the last chapter, nor any new revelation to Moses, for aught that appears, and therefore the style here is not, as before, *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying*. But the former laws are repeated and commented upon, explained and enlarged, and some particular precepts added to them, with copious reasonings for the enforcing of them; in this, Moses was divinely inspired and assisted, so that this is as truly the word of the Lord by Moses, as that which was spoken to him with an audible voice *out of the tabernacle of the congregation*, Lev. 1. 1. The Greek interpreters called it *Deuteronomy*, which signifies the *second law*; or a *second edition of the law*, not with amendments, for there needed none, but with additions, for the further direction of the people in divers cases not mentioned before. Now,

- I. It was much for the honour of the divine law, that it should be thus repeated; how great were the things of that law which was thus inculcated, and how inexcusable would they be by whom they were *counted as a strange thing*! Hos. 8. 12.
- II. There might be a particular reason for the repeating of it now; the men of that generation to which the law was first given, were all dead, and a new generation was sprung up, to whom God would have it repeated by Moses himself, that, if possible, it might make a lasting impression upon them. Now that they were just going to take possession of the land of Canaan, Moses must read the articles of agreement to them, that they might know upon what terms and conditions they were to hold and enjoy that land, and might understand that they were upon their good behaviour in it.
- III. It would be of great use to the people to have those parts of the law thus gathered up and put together, which did more immediately concern them, and their practice; for the laws which concerned the priests and Levites, and the execution of their offices, are not repeated; it was enough for them that they were once delivered; but, in compassion to the infirmities of the people, the laws of more common concern are delivered a second time. *Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line*, Isa. 28. 10. The great and needful truths of the gospel should be often pressed upon people by the ministers of Christ. *To write the same things* (says Paul, Philip. 3. 1.) *to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe*. What God has spoken once, we have need to hear twice, to hear many times, and it is well if, after all, it be duly perceived and regarded.—Three ways this book of Deuteronomy was magnified and made honourable; 1. The king was to write a copy of it with his own hand, and to read therein all the days of his life, *ch. 17, 18, 19.* 2. It was to be written upon great stones plastered, at their passing over Jordan, *ch. 27. 2, 3.* 3. It was to be read publicly every seventh year, at the feast of tabernacles, by the priests, in the audience of all Israel, *ch. 31. 9, &c.* The Gospel is a kind of Deuteronomy, a second law, a remedial law, a special law, a law of faith; by it we are under the law to Christ, and it is a law that *makes the comers thereunto perfect*.—This book of Deuteronomy begins with a brief rehearsal of the most remarkable events that had befallen the Israelites since they came from mount Si-

nai; in the fourth chapter we have a most pathetic exhortation to obedience; in the twelfth chapter, and so on to the twenty-seventh, are repeated many particular laws, which are enforced (*ch.* 27, and 28.) with promises and threatenings, blessings and curses, formed into a covenant, *ch.* 29, and 30. Care is taken to perpetuate the remembrance of these things among them, (*ch.* 31.) particularly by a song, (*ch.* 32) and so Moses concludes by a blessing, *ch.* 33.—All this was delivered by Moses to Israel in the last month of his life. The whole book contains the history but of two months; compare *ch.* 1. 3. with Josh. 4. 19. the latter of which was the thirty days of Israel's mourning for Moses; see how busy that great and good man was to do good, when he knew that his time was short; how quick his motion, when he drew near his rest. Thus we have more recorded of what our blessed Saviour said and did in the last week of his life, than in any other. The last words of eminent persons make, or should make, deep impressions.—Observe, for the honour of this book, that when our Saviour would answer the Devil's temptations with, *It is written*, he fetched each of his quotations out of this book, Matth. 4. 7, 10.

## DEUTERONOMY, I.

### CHAP. I.

The first part of Moses's farewell sermon to Israel begins with this chapter, and is continued to the latter end of the fourth chapter. In the five first verses of this chapter we have the date of the sermon, the place where it was preached, v. 1, 2, 5, and the time when, v. 3, 4. The narrative in this chapter reminds them, I. Of the promise God made them of the land of Canaan, v. 6. . 8. II. Of the provision made of judges for them, v. 9. . 18. III. Of their unbelief and murmuring upon the report of the spies, v. 19. . 33. IV. Of the sentence passed upon them for it, and the ratification of that sentence, v. 34. . 46.

1. **THESE** be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazereth, and Dizahab. 2. (*There are eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of mount Seir, unto Kadesh-barnea.*) 3. And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them; 4. After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei: 5. On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, 6. The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: 7. Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea-side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. 8. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them, and to their seed after them.

We have here,

1. The date of this sermon which Moses preached to the people of Israel. A great auditory, no question, he had, as many as could crowd within hearing, and particularly all the elders and officers,

the representatives of the people; and, probably, it was on the sabbath-day that he delivered this to them. (1.) The place, where they were now encamped, was *in the plain, in the land of Moab*, (v. 1, 5.) where they were just ready to enter Canaan, and engage in a war with the Canaanites; yet he discourses not to them concerning military affairs, the arts and stratagems of war, but concerning their duty to God; for if they kept themselves in his fear and favour, he would secure to them the conquest of the land; their religion would be their best policy. (2.) The time was near the end of the fortieth year since they came out of Egypt. So long God had borne their manners, and they had borne their own iniquity, (Numb. 14. 34.) and now that a new and more pleasant scene was to be introduced, as a token for good, Moses repeats the law to them. Thus after God's controversy with them on account of the golden calf, the first and surest sign of God's being reconciled to them, was, the *renewing of the tables*. There is no better evidence and earnest of God's favour than his putting his law in our hearts, Ps. 147. 19, 20.

2. The discourse itself. In general, Moses spake unto them *all that the Lord had given him in commandment*; (v. 3.) which intimates, not only that what he now delivered, was for substance the same with what had formerly been commanded, but that it was what God now commanded him to repeat. He gave them this rehearsal and exhortation purely by divine direction; God appointed him to leave this legacy to the church.

He begins his narrative with the removal from mount Sinai, (v. 6.) and relates here, (1.) The orders which God gave them to decamp, and proceed in their march, v. 6, 7, *Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount*; that was the mount that burned with fire, (Heb. 12. 18.) and gendered to bondage, Gal. 4. 24. Thither God brought them to humble them, and by the terrors of the law to prepare them for the land of promise. There he kept them about a year, and then told them they had dwelt long enough there, they must go forward. Though God bring his people into trouble and affliction, into spiritual trouble and affliction of mind, he knows when they have dwelt long enough in it, and will certainly find a time, the fittest time, to advance them from the terrors of the *spirit of bondage* to the comforts of the *spirit of adoption*. See Rom. 8. 15. (2.) The prospect which he gave them of a happy and early settlement in Canaan. *Go to the land of the Canaanites*; (v. 7.) enter and take possession, it is all your own. *Behold, I have set the land before you*, v. 8. When God commands us to go forward in our christian course, he sets the heavenly Canaan before us for our encouragement.

9. And I spake unto you at that time

saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: 10. The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, you *are* this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. 11. (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye *are*, and bless you, as he hath promised you!) 12. How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? 13. Take ye wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. 14. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken *is good for us to do*. 15. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. 16. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger *that is with him*. 17. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; *but* you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment *is* God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it. 18. And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Moses here reminds them of the happy constitution of their government, which was such as might make them all safe and easy, if it was not their own fault. When good laws were given them, good men were intrusted with the execution of them; which as it was an instance of God's goodness to them, so it was of the cure of Moses concerning them; and, it should seem, he mentions it here, to recommend himself to them as a man that sincerely sought their welfare, and so to make way for what he was about to say to them, wherein he aimed at nothing but their good.

In this part of his narrative he insinuates to them,

1. That he greatly rejoiced in the increase of their numbers. He owns the accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham, (v. 10.) *Ye are as the stars of heaven for multitude*; and prays for the further accomplishment of it, (v. 11.) *God make you a thousand times more*. This prayer comes in, in a parenthesis, and a good prayer prudently put in cannot be impertinent, in any discourse of divine things; nor will a pious ejaculation break the coherence, but rather strengthen and adorn it. But how greatly are his desires enlarged, when he prays that they might be made a thousand times more than they were! We are not straitened in the power and goodness of God, why should we be straitened in our own faith and hope, which ought to be as large as the promise? larger it needs not be. It is from the promise that Moses here takes the measures of his prayer, *The Lord bless you as he hath promised you*. And why might he not hope that they might become a thousand times more than they were now, when they were now ten thousand times more than they were when they went down into Egypt, about 250 years ago? Ob-

serve, When they were under the government of Pharaoh, the increase of their numbers was envied, and complained of as a grievance; (Exod. 1. 9.) but now, under the government of Moses, it was rejoiced in, and prayed for, as a blessing; the comparing of which might give them occasion to reflect with shame upon their own folly, when they had talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt.

2. That he was not ambitious of monopolizing the honour of the government, and ruling them himself alone, as an absolute monarch, v. 9. Though he was a man as well worthy of that honour, and as well qualified for the business, as ever any man was, yet he was desirous that others might be taken in as assistants to him in the business, and consequently sharers with him in the honour. *I cannot myself alone bear the burden*, v. 12. Magistracy is a burthen. Moses himself, though eminently gifted for it, found it lay heavy on his shoulders; nay, the best magistrates complain most of the burthen, and are most desirous of help, and most afraid of undertaking more than they can perform.

3. That he was not desirous to prefer his own creatures, or such as underhand should have a dependence upon him; for he leaves it to the people to choose their own judges, to whom he would grant commissions, not *durante bene placito*—to be turned out when he pleased; but *quam diu se bene gesserint*—to continue so long as they approved themselves faithful, v. 13. *Take you wise men, that are known to be so among your tribes, and I will make them rulers*. Thus the apostle directed the multitude to choose overseers of the poor, and then they ordained them, Acts 6. 3, 6. He directs them to *take wise men and understanding*, whose personal merit would recommend them; the rise and original of this nation were so late, that none of them could pretend to antiquity of race, and nobility of birth, above their brethren; and they having all lately come out of slavery in Egypt, it is probable that one family was not much richer than another; so that their choice must be directed purely by the qualifications of wisdom, experience, and integrity. "Choose those," says Moses, "whose praise is in your tribes, and, with all my heart, *I will make them rulers*." We must not grudge that God's work be done by other hands than our's, provided it be done by good hands.

4. That he was in this matter very willing to please the people; and though he did not in any thing aim at their applause, yet in a thing of this nature he would not act without their approbation. And they agreed to the proposal, (v. 14.) *The thing which thou hast spoken, is good*. This he mentions, to aggravate the sin of their mutinies and discontents after this, that the government they quarrelled with, was what they themselves had consented to; Moses would have pleased them, if they would have been pleased.

5. That he aimed to edify them, as well as to gratify them; for, (1.) He appointed them of good characters, (v. 15.) *wise men and men known*, men that would be faithful to their trust, and to the public interest. (2.) He gave them a good charge, v. 16, 17. Those that are advanced to honour, must know that they are charged with business, and must give account another day of their charge. [1.] *He charges them to be diligent and patient; Hear the causes*. Hear both sides, hear them fully, hear them carefully, for nature has provided us with two ears, and *he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him*. The ear of the learner is necessary to the tongue of the learned, Isa. 50. 4. [2.] *To be just and impartial; Judge righteously*. Judgment must be given according to the merits of the cause, without regard to the quality of the parties. The natives must not

be suffered to abuse the strangers, any more than the strangers to insult the natives, or to encroach upon them: the great must not be suffered to oppress the small, or to crush them, any more than the small to rob the great, or to affront them. No faces must be known in judgment, but unbribed unbiassed equity must always pass sentence. [3.]

To be resolute and courageous; "*Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man.*" Be not overawed to do an ill thing, either by the clamours of the crowd, or by the menaces of those that have power in their hands." And he gave them a good reason to enforce this charge, "*For the judgment is God's.*" You are God's vicegerents, you act for him, and therefore must act like him; you are his representatives, but if you judge unrighteously, you misrepresent him. The judgment is his, and therefore he will protect you in doing right; and will certainly call you to account if you do wrong." And, (Lastly,) He allowed them to bring all difficult cases to him, and he would always be ready to hear and determine, and to make both the judges and the people easy. *Hapily art thou, O Israel, in such a prince as Moses was.*

19. And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which you saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. 20. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. 21. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. 22. And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. 23. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe: 24. And they turned, and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. 25. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, *It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us.* 26. Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God. 27. And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great, and walled up to heaven: and, moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. 29. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. 30. The LORD your God, which

goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; 31. And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. 32. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God. 33. Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day. 34. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, 35. Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers, 36. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it; and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD. 37. Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him; for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. 39. Moreover, your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. 40. But as for you, turn ye, and take your journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea. 41. Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up, and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. 42. And the LORD said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. 43. So I spake unto you; and you would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill. 44. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. 45. And ye returned, and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. 46. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there.

Moses here makes a large rehearsal of that fatal turn which was given them by their own sins, and God's wrath, when, from the very borders of Canaan, the honour of conquering it, and the pleasure of possessing it, the whole generation was hurried



back into the wilderness, and their carcases fell there. It was a memorable story; we read it Numb. 13, and 14, but divers circumstances are found here, which are not related there.

1. He reminds them of their march from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, (v. 19.) through that *great and terrible wilderness*. This he takes notice of, (1.) To make them sensible of the great goodness of God to them, in guiding them through so *great* a wilderness, and protecting them from the mischiefs they were surrounded with in such a *terrible* wilderness. The remembrance of our dangers should make us thankful for our deliverances. (2.) To aggravate the folly of those, who, in their discontent, would have gone back to Egypt through the wilderness, though they had forfeited, and had no reason to expect, the divine conduct, in such a retrograde motion.

2. He shows them how fair they stood for Canaan at that time, v. 20, 21. He told them with triumph, *The land is set before you, go up, and possess it*. He lets them see how near they were to a happy settlement, when they put a bar in their own door, that their sin might appear the more exceeding sinful. It will aggravate the eternal ruin of hypocrites, that they were *not far from the kingdom of God*, and yet came short, Mark 12. 34.

3. He lays the blame of sending the spies upon them, which did not appear in Numbers; there it is said (ch. 13. 1, 2.) that the Lord directed the sending of them, but here we find that the people first desired it, and God, in permitting it, gave them up to their *own counsels*, v. 22. *Ye said, we will send men before us*. Moses had given them God's word; (v. 20, 21.) but they could not find in their hearts to rely upon that: human policy goes further with them than divine wisdom, and they will needs light a candle to the sun. As if it were not enough that they were sure of a *God* before them, they must send *men* before them.

4. He repeats the report which the spies brought of the goodness of the land, which they were sent to survey, v. 24, 25. The blessings which God has promised, are truly valuable and desirable, even the unbelievers themselves being judges: never any looked into the Holy Land, but they must own it a good land. Yet they represented the difficulties of conquering it as insuperable; (v. 28.) as if it were in vain to think of attacking them either by battle, for the people are taller than we, or by siege, for the cities are walled up to heaven: an hyperbole which they made use of to serve their ill purpose, which was to dishearten the people, and perhaps they intended to reflect upon the God of heaven himself, as if they were able to defy him, like the Babel-builders, the top of whose tower must reach to heaven, Gen. 11. 4. Those places only are walled up to heaven, that are compassed with God's favour as with a shield.

5. He tells them what pains he took with them to encourage them, when their brethren had said so much to discourage them, (v. 29.) *Then I said unto you, Dread not*. Moses suggested enough to have stilled the tumult, and to have kept them with their faces toward Canaan. He assured them that God was present with them, and President among them, and would certainly *fight for them*, v. 30. As for proof of his power over their enemies, he refers them to what they had seen in Egypt, where their enemies had all possible advantages against them, and yet were humbled, and forced to yield, v. 30. And for proof of God's good-will to them, and the real kindness which he intended them, he refers them to what *they had seen in the wilderness*, (v. 31, 33.) through which they had been guided by the eye of divine wisdom, in a pillar of cloud and fire, which guide both their motions and their

rests; and had been carried in the arms of divine grace, with as much care and tenderness as ever any child was borne in the arms of a nursing father. And was there any room left to distrust this God? Or were they not the most ungrateful people in the world, who, after such sensible proofs of the divine goodness, *hardened their hearts in the day of temptation*? Moses had complained once, that God had charged him to carry this people as *the nursing father doth the sucking child*; (Numb. 11. 12.) but here he owns that it was God that so carried them, and perhaps this is alluded to, (Acts 13. 18.) where he is said to *bear them*, or to *suffer their manners*.

6. He charges them with the sin which they were guilty of upon this occasion. Though those whom he was now speaking to, were a new generation, yet he lays it upon them, *Ye rebelled, and ye murmured*; for many of these were then in being, though under twenty years old, and perhaps were engaged in the riot; and the rest inherited their fathers' vices, and smarted for them. Observe what he lays to their charge; (1.) Disobedience, and rebellion against God's law. *Ye would not go up, but rebelled*, v. 26. The rejecting of God's favours is really a rebelling against his authority. (2.) Invidious reflections upon God's goodness. They basely suggested, (v. 27.) *Because the Lord hated us, he brought us out of Egypt*. What could have been more absurd, more disingenuous, and more reproachful to God? (3.) An unbelieving heart at the bottom of all this, (v. 32.) *Ye did not believe the Lord your God*. All your disobedience to God's laws, and distrust of his power and goodness, flow from a disbelief of his word. A sad pass it is come to with us, when the God of eternal truth cannot be believed.

7. He repeats the sentence passed upon them for this sin, which now they had seen the execution of. (1.) They were all condemned to die in the wilderness, and none of them must be suffered to enter Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua, v. 34. . 38. So long they must continue their wanderings in the wilderness, that most of them would drop off of course, and the youngest of them should be cut off. Thus *they could not enter in because of unbelief*. It was not the breach of any of the commands of the law that shut them out of Canaan, no, not the golden calf, but their disbelief of that promise which was typical of gospel-grace, to signify that no sin will ruin us but unbelief, which is a sin against the remedy. (2.) Moses himself afterward fell under God's displeasure, for a hasty word which they provoked him to speak; (v. 37.) *The Lord was angry with me for your sakes*. Because all the old stock must go off, Moses himself must not stay behind. Their unbelief let death into the camp, and, having entered, even Moses falls within his commission. (3.) Yet here is mercy mixed with wrath. [1.] That though Moses might not bring them into Canaan, Joshua should, (v. 38.) *Encourage him*; for he would be discouraged from taking up a government which he saw Moses himself fall under the weight of; but let him be assured that he shall accomplish that for which he is raised up, *he shall cause Israel to inherit it*. Thus *what the law could not do in that it was weak*, Jesus, our Joshua, does by bringing in the better hope. [2.] That though this generation should not enter into Canaan, the next should, v. 39. As they had been chosen for their fathers' sakes, so their children might justly have been rejected for their sakes. But *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*.

8. He reminds them of their foolish and fruitless attempt to get this sentence reversed, when it was too late. (1.) They tried it by their reformation, in this particular; whereas they had refused to go up against the Canaanites, now they would go up

in all haste, and they girded on their weapons of war for that purpose, *v.* 41. Thus, when the door is shut, and the day of grace over, there will be found those that stand without and knock. But this which looked like a reformation, proved but a further rebellion; God, by Moses, prohibited the attempt; (*v.* 42.) *yet they went presumptuously up to the hill,* (*v.* 43.) acting now in contempt of the threatening, as before in contempt of the promise, as if they were governed by a spirit of contradiction; and it sped accordingly; (*v.* 44.) they were chased and destroyed, and by this defeat which they suffered, when they had provoked God to leave them, they were taught what success they might have had if they had kept themselves in his love. (2.) They tried by their prayers and tears to get the sentence reversed, (*v.* 45.) *They returned and wept before the Lord.* While they were fretting and quarrelling, it is said, (*Numb.* 14. 1.) *They wept that night;* those were tears of rebellion against God, these were tears of repentance and humiliation before God. Note, Tears of discontent must be wept over again; the sorrow of the world worketh death, and is to be repented of; it is not so with godly sorrow, *that will end in joy.* But their weeping was all to no purpose, *The Lord would not hearken to your voice,* because you would not hearken to his; the decree was gone forth, and, like Esau, they found no place of repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears.

## CHAP. II.

Moses, in this chapter, proceeds in the rehearsal of God's providences concerning Israel in their way to Canaan, yet preserves not the record of any thing that happened during their tedious march back to the Red-sea, in which they were almost 38 years, but passes that over in silence, as a dark time; and makes his narrative to begin again when they faced about toward Canaan, (*v.* 1..3.) and drew toward the countries that were inhabited, concerning which God here gives them direction, 1. What nations they must not give any disturbance to. 1. Not to the Edomites, *v.* 4..8. 2. Not to the Moabites, (*v.* 9.) of the antiquities of whose country, with that of the Edomites, he gives some account, *v.* 10..12. And here comes in an account of their passing the river Zered, *v.* 13..16. 3. Not to the Ammonites, of whose country here is some account given, *v.* 17..23. II. What nations they should attack and conquer. They must begin with Sihon, King of the Amorites, *v.* 24..26. And accordingly, 1. They had a fair occasion of quarrelling with him, *v.* 26..32. 2. God gave them a complete victory over him, *v.* 33..37.

1. **T**HEN we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days. 2. And the LORD spake unto me, saying, 3. Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward. 4. And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore: 5. Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no not so much as a foot-breadth, because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. 6. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink. 7. For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; he knoweth thy walk-

ing through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing.

Here is, 1. A short account of the long stay of Israel in the wilderness; *We compassed mount Seir many days, v.* 1. Near 38 years they wandered in the deserts of Seir; probably, in some of their rests they stayed several years, and never stirred; God by this not only chastised them for their murmuring and unbelief, but, (1.) Prepared them for Canaan, by humbling them for sin, teaching them to mortify their lusts, to follow God, and to comfort themselves in him. It is a work of time to make souls meet for heaven, and it must be done by a long train of exercises. (2.) He prepared the Canaanites for destruction: all this time the measure of their iniquity was filling up; and though it might have been improved by them as a space to repent in, it was abused by them to the hardening of their hearts. Now that the host of Israel was once repulsed, and after that, was so long entangled, and seemingly lost, in the wilderness, they were secure, and thought the danger was over from that quarter, which would make the next attempt of Israel upon them the more dreadful.

2. Orders given them to turn toward Canaan. Though God contend long, he will not contend for ever. Though Israel may be long kept waiting for deliverance and enlargement, it will come at last; *The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie.*

3. A charge given them not to annoy the Edomites: (1.) They must not offer any hostility to them as enemies; (*v.* 4, 5.) *Meddle not with them.* [1.] They must not improve the advantage they had against them, by the fright they would be put into upon Israel's approach. *"They shall be afraid of you,* knowing your strength and numbers, and the power of God engaged for you; but think not that because their fears make them an easy prey, you may therefore prey upon them; no, *take heed to yourselves."* There is need of great caution, and a strict government of our own spirits, to keep ourselves from injuring those whom we have an advantage against. Or, this caution is given to the princes; they must not only not meddle with the Edomites themselves, but not permit any of the soldiers to meddle with them. [2.] They must not avenge upon the Edomites the affront they gave them in refusing them passage through their country, *Numb.* 20. 21. Thus before God brought Israel to destroy their enemies in Canaan, he taught them to forgive their enemies in Edom. [3.] They must not expect to have any part of their land given them for a possession; mount Seir was already settled upon the Edomites, and they must not, under pretence of God's covenant and conduct, think to seize for themselves all they could lay hand on. Dominion is not founded in grace. God's Israel shall be well-placed, but must not expect to be *placed alone in the midst of the earth,* *Isa.* 5. 8. (2.) They must trade with them as neighbours: buy meat and water of them, and pay for what they bought; (*v.* 6.) religion must never be made a cloak for injustice. The reason given, (*v.* 7.) is, because God hath blessed thee, and hitherto thou hast lacked nothing; and therefore, [1.] "Thou needest not beg; scorn to be beholden to Edomites, when thou hast a God all-sufficient to depend upon. Thou hast wherewithal to pay for what thou callest for, (thanks to the divine blessing!) use therefore what thou hast, use it cheerfully, and do not sponge upon the Edomites." [2.] "Therefore thou must not steal. Thou hast experienced the care of the divine providence concerning thee, in confidence of which, for the future, and in a firm belief of its

sufficiency, never use any indirect methods for thy supply. Live by thy faith, and not by thy sword."

8. And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Ezion-gaber, we turned, and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab. 9. And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give thee of their land *for* a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot *for* a possession. 10. The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; 11. Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims. 12. The Horims also dwelt in Seir before-time; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them. 13. Now rise up, *said I*, and get you over the brook Zered: and we went over the brook Zered. 14. And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, *was* thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD sware unto them. 15. For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed. 16. So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people, 17. That the LORD spake unto me, saying, 18. Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day. 19. And *when* thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon *any* possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot *for* a possession. 20. (That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time, and the Ammonites called them Zamzummins; 21. A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead: 22. As he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day: 23. And the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, *even* unto Azzah, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.)

It is observable here that Moses, speaking of the Edomites, (v. 8.) calls them *our brethren*, the children of Esau; though they had been unkind to Israel, in refusing them a peaceable passage through their country, yet he calls them *brethren*. For though our relations fail in their duty to us, we must retain a sense of the relation, and not be wanting in our duty to them, as there is occasion.

Now in these verses we have,

1. The account which Moses gives of the original of the nations which he had here occasion to speak of; the Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites. We know very well, from other parts of his history, whose posterity they were, but here he tells us how they came to these countries in which Israel found them; they were not the *aborigines*, or first planters. But, (1.) The Moabites dwelt in a country which had belonged to a numerous race of giants, called *Emims*, that is, *terrible ones*; as tall as the Anakims, and perhaps more fierce, v. 10, 11. (2.) The Edomites in like manner dispossessed the Horims from mount Seir, and took their country, (v. 12. and again, v. 22.) of which we read, Gen. 36. 20. (3.) The Ammonites likewise got possession of a country that had formerly been inhabited by giants, called *Zamzummins*, *crafty men*, or *wicked men*; (v. 20, 21.) probably, the same that are called *Zuzims*, Gen. 14. 5. He illustrates these remarks by an instance older than any of these; the Caphtorims (who were akin to the Philistines, Gen. 10. 14.) drove the Avims out of their country, and took possession of it, v. 23. The learned Bishop Patrick supposes these Avites, being expelled hence, to have settled in Assyria, and to be the same people we read of under that name, 2 Kings 17. 31. Now these revolutions are recorded, [1.] To show how soon the world was peopled after the flood; so well peopled, that when a family grew numerous, they could not find a place to settle in, at least, in that part of the world, but they must drive out those that were already settled. [2.] To show that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Giants were expelled by those of ordinary stature; for, probably, these giants, like those before the flood, (Gen. 6. 4.) were notorious for impiety and oppression, which brought the judgments of God upon them, against which their great strength would be no defence. [3.] To show what uncertain things worldly possessions are, and how often they change their owners: it was so of old, and ever will be so. Families decline, and from them estates are transferred to families that increase; so little constancy or continuance is there in these things! [4.] To encourage the children of Israel, who were now going to take possession of Canaan, against the difficulties they would meet with, and to show the unbelief of those that were afraid of the sons of Anak, to whom the giants, here said to be conquered, are compared, v. 11, 21. If the providence of God had done this for Moabites and Ammonites, much more would his promise do it for Israel his peculiar people.

2. The advances which Israel made towards Canaan. They *passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab*, (v. 8.) and then went over the brook or vale of Zered, (v. 13.) and there Moses takes notice of the fulfilling of the word which God had spoken concerning them; that none of those that were numbered at mount Sinai, should see the land that God had promised, Numb. 14. 23. According to that sentence, now that they began to set their faces toward Canaan, and to have it in their eye, notice is taken of their being all destroyed and consumed, and not a man of them left, v. 14. Common providence, we may observe, in about 38 years, ordinarily raises a new generation, so that in that time few remain of the old one; but here it was entirely

new, and none at all remained but Caleb and Joshua: *for indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, v. 15.* These cannot but waste, until they are consumed, who have the *hand of God against them.* Observe, Israel is not called to engage with the Canaanites till all the men of war, the veteran regiments, that had been used to hardship, and had learned the art of war from the Egyptians, *were consumed and dead from among the people; (v. 16.)* that the conquest of Canaan, being effected by a host of new-raised men, trained up in a wilderness, the excellency of the power might the more plainly appear to be *of God, and not of men.*

3. The caution given them, not to meddle with the Moabites or Ammonites, whom they must not dispossess, nor so much as disturb, in their possessions. *Distress them not, nor contend with them, v. 9.* Though the Moabites aimed to ruin Israel, (Numb. 22. 6.) yet Israel must not aim to ruin them. If others design us a mischief, that will not justify us in designing them a mischief. But why must not the Moabites and Ammonites be meddled with? (1.) Because they were the *children of Lot, (v. 9, 19.)* righteous Lot, who kept his integrity in Sodom. Note, Children often fare the better in this world for the piety of their ancestors; the seed of the upright, though they degenerate, yet are blessed with temporal good things. (2.) Because the land they were possessed of, was what God had given them, and he did not design it for Israel. Even wicked men have a right to their worldly possessions, and must not be wronged. The tares are allowed their place in the field, and must not be rooted out until the harvest. God gives and preserves outward blessings to wicked men, to show that these are not the best things, but he has better in store for his own children.

24. Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thy hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. 25. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee. 26. And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth, unto Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, 27. Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway; I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. 28. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet; 29. (As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan, into the land which the LORD our God giveth us. 30. But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as *appeareth* this day. 31. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou

mayest inherit his land. 32. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. 33. And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. 34. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city; we left none to remain: 35. Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took. 36. From Ar, which is by the brink of the river of Arnon, and from the city that is by the river, even unto Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us: the LORD our God delivered all unto us. 37. Only unto the land of the children of Ammon thou camest not, nor unto any place of the river Jabbok, nor unto the cities in the mountains, nor unto whatsoever the LORD our God forbade us.

God having tried the self-denial of his peep'e, in forbidding them to meddle with the Moabites and Ammonites, and they having quietly passed by those rich countries, and, though superior in number, not made any attack upon them, here he recompenses them for their obedience by giving them possession of the country of Sihon king of the Amorites. If we forbear what God forbids, we shall receive what he promises, and shall be no losers at last by our obedience, though it may seem for the present to be our loss. Wrong not others, and God shall right thee.

1. God gives them commission to seize upon the country of Sihon king of Heshbon, v. 24, 25. This was then God's way of disposing of kingdoms, but such particular grants are not new either to be expected or pretended. In this commission, observe, (1.) Though God assured them that the land should be their own, yet they must bestir themselves, and contend in battle with the enemy. What God gives, we must endeavour to get. (2.) God promises that when they fight, he will fight for them. Do you begin to possess it, and I will begin to put the dread of you upon them. God would dispirit the enemy, and so destroy them; would magnify Israel, and so terrify all those against whom they were commissioned. See Exod. 15. 14.

2. Moses sends to Sihon a message of peace, and only begs a passage through this land, with a promise to give his country no disturbance, but the advantage of trading for ready money with so great a body, v. 26-29. Moses herein did neither disobey God, who bid him contend with Sihon, nor dissemble with Sihon; but doubtless it was by divine direction that he did it, that Sihon might be left inexcusable, though God *hardened his heart.* This may illustrate the method of God's dealing with those to whom he gives his gospel, but does not give grace to believe it.

3. Sihon began the war; (v. 32.) God having made his heart obstinate, and hid from his eyes the things that belonged to his peace, (v. 30.) that he might deliver him into the hand of Israel. These that meddle with the people of God, meddle to their own hurt; and God sometimes ruins his enemies by their own resolves. See Mic. 4. 11-13. Rev. 16. 14.

4. Israel was victorious. (1.) They put all the Amorites to the sword, men, women, and children; (v. 33, 34.) this they did as the executioners of

God's wrath; now the measure of the Amorites' iniquity was full, (Gen. 15, 16.) and the longer it was in the filling, the sorer was the reckoning at last. This was one of the devoted nations, they died not as Israel's enemies; but as sacrifices to divine justice, in the offering of which sacrifices Israel was employed, as a kingdom of priests. The case being therefore extraordinary, it ought not to be drawn into a precedent for military executions, which make no distinction, and give no quarter: they will have judgment *without mercy, that show no mercy.* (2.) They took possession of all they had; their cities, (v. 34.) their goods, (v. 35.) and their land, v. 36. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. What a new world did Israel now come into! Most of them were born, and had lived all their days, in a vast howling wilderness, where they knew not what either fields or cities were, had no houses to dwell in, and neither sowed nor reaped; and now of a sudden to become masters of a country so well-built, so well-husbanded, this made them amends for their long waiting, and yet it was but the earnest of a great deal more. Much more joyful will the change be which holy souls will experience, when they remove out of the wilderness of this world to the *better country, that is, the heavenly; to the city that has foundations.*

### CHAP. III.

Moses, in this chapter, relates, I. The conquest of Og, king of Bashan, and the seizing of his country, v. 1.-11. II. The distribution of these new conquests to the two tribes and a half, v. 12.-17. Under certain provisos and limitations, v. 18.-20. III. The encouragement given to Joshua to carry on the war which was so gloriously begun, v. 21, 22. IV. Moses's request to go over into Canaan, (v. 23, 25.) with the denial of that request, but the grant of an equivalent, v. 26.-29.

1. **THEN** we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 2. And the Lord said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. 3. So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him, until none was left to him remaining. 4. And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 5. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates and bars; besides unwalled towns a great many. 6. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city. 7. But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves. 8. And we took at that time, out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites, the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon; 9. (Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir; 10. All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan,

unto Salebah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 11. For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron: is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.

We have here another brave country delivered into the hand of Israel, that of Bashan; the conquest of Sihon is often mentioned together with that of Og, to the praise of God, the rather because in these Israel's triumphs began, Ps. 135. 11.—136. 19, 20.

See, 1. How they got the mastery of Og, a very formidable prince; (1.) Very strong, for he was of the remnant of the giants; (v. 11.) his personal strength was extraordinary; a monument of which was preserved by the Ammonites in his bedstead, which was showed as a rarity in their chief city. You might guess at his weight by the materials of his bedstead, it was iron, as if a bedstead of wood were too weak for him to trust to; and you might guess at his stature by the dimensions of it, it was nine cubits long, and four cubits broad; which, supposing a cubit to be but half a yard, (and some learned men have made it appear to be somewhat more,) was four yards and a half long, and two yards broad; and if we allow his bedstead to be two cubits longer than himself, and that is as much as we need allow, he was three yards and a half high, double the stature of an ordinary man, and every way proportionable, yet they smote him, v. 3. Note, When God pleads his people's cause, he can deal with giants as with grasshoppers. No man's might can secure him against the Almighty. The army of Og was very powerful, for he had the command of sixty fortified cities, beside unwalled towns, v. 5. Yet all this was nothing before God's Israel, when they came with commission to destroy him. (2.) He was very stout and daring; he came out against Israel to battle, v. 1. It was wonderful that he did not take warning by the ruin of Sihon, and send to desire conditions of peace; but he trusted to his own strength, and so was hardened to his destruction. Note, Those that are not awakened by the judgments of God upon others, but persist in their defiance of heaven, are ripening apace for the like judgments upon themselves, Jer. 3. 8. God bade Moses not fear him, v. 2. If Moses himself was so strong in faith as not to need the caution, yet it is probable that the people needed it; and for them these fresh assurances are designed, "I will deliver him into thine hand; not only deliver thee out of his hand, that he shall not be thy ruin, but deliver him into thy hand, that thou shalt be his ruin, and make him pay dear for his attempt." He adds, Thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sihon; intimating that they ought to be encouraged by their former victory to trust in God for another victory, for he is God, and changeth not.

How they got possession of Bashan, a very desirable country. They took all the cities, (v. 4.) and all the spoil of them, v. 7. They made them all their own, v. 10. So that now they had in their hands all that fruitful country which lay east of Jordan, from the river Arnon unto Hermon, v. 8. Their conquering and possessing these countries was intended, not only for the encouragement of Israel in the wars of Canaan, but for the satisfaction of Moses before his death; because he must not live to see the completing of their victory and settlement, God thus gives him a specimen of it. Thus the Spirit is given to them that believe, as the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

12. And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, *which is* by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites. 13. And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, *being* the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half-tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants. 14. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob, unto the coasts of Jeshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day. 15. And I gave Gilead unto Machir. 16. And unto the Reubenites, and unto the Gadites, I gave from Gilead even unto the river Arnon, half the valley, and the border, even unto the river Jabbok, *which is* the border of the children of Ammon: 17. The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast *thereof*, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, under Ashdod-pisgah eastward. 18. And I commanded you at that time, saying, The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all *that* are meet for the war. 19. But your wives, and your little ones, and your cattle, (*for* I know that ye have much cattle,) shall abide in your cities which I have given you; 20. Until the LORD have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and *until* they also possess the land which the LORD your God hath given them beyond Jordan: and *then* shall ye return every man unto his possession which I have given you.

Having showed how this country which they were now in, was conquered, in these verses he shows how it was settled upon the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh, which we had the story of before, Numb. 32. Here is the rehearsal.

1. Moses specifies the particular parts of the country that were allotted to each tribe; especially the distribution of the lot to the half tribe of Manasseh, the subdividing of which tribe is observable. Joseph was divided into Ephraim and Manasseh; Manasseh was divided into one half on the one side Jordan, and the other half on the other side: that here on the east side Jordan was again divided into two great families, which had their several allotments, Jair, v. 14, Machir, v. 15. And perhaps Jacob's prediction of the smallness of that tribe was now accomplished in these divisions and subdivisions. Observe that Bashan is here called *the land of the giants*, because it had been in their possession, but Og was the last of them. These giants, it seems, had lost their country, and were rooted out of it sooner than any of their neighbours; for they who, presuming upon their strength and stature, had their hand against every man, had every man's hand against them, and went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

2. He repeats the condition of the grant which they had already agreed to, v. 18: 20. That they

should send a strong detachment over Jordan to lead the van in the conquest of Canaan, who should not return to their families, at least, not to settle, (though for a time they might retire thither into winter quarters, at the end of a campaign,) till they had seen their brethren in as full possession of their respective allotments, as themselves were now in of their's. They must hereby be taught not to *look at their own things only, but at the things of others*, Phil. 2. 4. It ill becomes an Israelite to be selfish; and to prefer any private interest before the public welfare. When we are at rest, we should desire to see our brethren at rest too, and should be ready to do what we can towards it; for we are not born for ourselves, but are members one of another. A good man cannot rejoice much in the comforts of his family, unless withal he sees *peace upon Israel*, Ps. 128. 6.

21. And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. 22. Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God, he shall fight for you. 23. And I besought the LORD at that time, saying, 24. O LORD God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand: for what god *is there* in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? 25. I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. 26. But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. 27. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold *it* with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. 28. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see. 29. So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.

Here is,

1. The encouragement which Moses gave to Joshua, who was to succeed him in the government, v. 21, 22. He commanded him not to fear. Thus those that are aged and experienced in the service of God, should do all they can to strengthen the hands of those that are young, and setting out in religion. Two things he would have him consider for his encouragement; 1. What God had *done*. Joshua had seen what a total defeat God had given by the forces of Israel to these two kings, and from thence he might easily infer, *so shall the Lord do to all the rest of his kingdoms*, which we are to make war upon. He must not only infer from thence, that thus the Lord *can* do with them all, for his arm is not shortened, but thus he *will* do, for his purpose is not changed; he that has *begun*, will *finish*; as for God, his worship is perfect. Joshua had seen it *with his own eyes*. And the more we have seen of the instances of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, the more inexcusable we are, if we



*fear what flesh can do unto us.* 2. What God had promised. *The Lord your God, he shall fight for you;* and that cause cannot be but victorious, which the Lord of Hosts fights for. *If God be for us, who can be against us,* so as to prevail? We reproach our Leader if we follow him with trembling.

II. The prayer which Moses made for himself, and the answer which God gave to that prayer.

1. His prayer was, that, if it were God's will, he might go before Israel over Jordan into Canaan. At that time, when he had been encouraging Joshua to fight Israel's battles, taking it for granted that he must be their leader; upon that occasion, he was touched with an earnest desire to go over himself, which expresses itself not in any passionate and impatient complaints, or reflections upon the sentence he was under, but in humble prayers to God for a gracious reversing of it. *I besought the Lord.* Note, We should never allow any desires in our hearts, which we cannot in faith offer up to God by prayer; and what desires are innocent, let them be presented to God. *We have not, because we ask not.*

Observe, (1.) What he pleads here. Two things; [1.] The great experience which he had had of God's goodness to him in what he had done for Israel. *"Thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness."* Lord, perfect what thou hast begun. Thou hast given me to see thy glory in the conquest of these two kings, and the sight has affected me with wonder and thankfulness; O let me see more of the outgoings of my God, my King! This great work, no doubt, will be carried on and completed, let me have the satisfaction of seeing it." Note, the more we see of God's glory in his works, the more we shall desire to see. *The works of the Lord are great,* and therefore are sought out more and more of all them that have pleasure therein. [2.] The good impressions that had been made upon his heart by what he had seen; for *what God is there in heaven or earth, that can do according to thy works!* The more we are affected with what we have seen of God, and of his wisdom, power and goodness, the better we are prepared for further discoveries. Those shall see the works of God, that admire him in them. Moses had thus expressed himself concerning God and his works, long before, (Exod. 15. 11.) and he still continues of the same mind, that there are no works worthy to be compared with God's works, Ps. 86. 8.

(2.) What he begs. *I pray thee let me go over,* v. 25. God had said, *he should not go over;* yet he prays that he *might;* not knowing but that the threatening was conditional, for it was not ratified with an oath, as that concerning the people was, that they should not enter. Thus Hezekiah prayed for his own life, and David for the life of his child, after both had been expressly threatened; and the former prevailed, though the latter did not. Moses remembered the time, when he by prayer prevailed with God to recede from the declarations which he had made of his wrath against Israel, Exod. 32. 14. And why might he not hope in like manner to prevail for himself? *Let me go over and see the good land.* Not, "Let me go over and be a prince and a ruler there;" he seeks not his own honour, is content to resign the government to Joshua; but, "Let me go to be a spectator of thy kindness to Israel; to see what I believe concerning the goodness of the land of promise." How pathetically does he speak of Canaan, that *good land, that goodly mountain!* Note, Those may hope to obtain and enjoy God's favours, that know how to value them. What he means by *that goodly mountain,* we may learn from Ps. 78. 54. where it is said of God's Israel, that *he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain which his right hand had purchased:* where it is plainly to be

understood of the whole land of Canaan, yet with an eye to the sanctuary, the glory of it.

2. God's answer to this prayer had in it a mixture of *mercy and judgment,* that he might sing unto God of both.

(1.) There was judgment in the denial of his request, and that in something of anger too, v. 26. *The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes.* God not only sees sin in his people, but is much displeased with it; and even those that are delivered from the wrath to come, yet may lie under the tokens of God's wrath in this world, and may be denied some particular favour which their hearts are much set upon. God is a gracious, tender, loving Father; but he is angry with his children when they do amiss, and denies them many a thing that they desire and are ready to cry for. But how was he wroth with Moses, *for the sake of Israel?* Either, [1.] For that sin which they provoked him to. See Ps. 106. 32, 33. Or, [2.] The removal of Moses at that time, when he could so ill be spared, was a rebuke to all Israel, and a punishment of their sin. Or, [3.] It was for their sakes, that it might be a warning to them to take heed of offending God by passionate and unbelieving speeches at any time, after the similitude of his transgression; for if *this were done to such a green tree, what should be done to the dry?* He acknowledges that God would not hear him. God had often heard him for Israel, yet he would not hear him for himself. It was the prerogative of Christ, the great Intercessor, to be heard always, yet of him his enemies said, *He saved others, himself he could not save:* which the Jews would not have upbraided him with, had they considered that Moses, their great prophet, prevailed for others, but for himself he could not prevail. Though Moses, being one of the wrestling seed of Jacob, did not seek in vain, yet he had not the thing itself which he sought for. God may accept our prayers, and yet not grant us the very thing we pray for.

Here is mercy mixed with this wrath, in several things;

[1.] God quieted the spirit of Moses under the decree that was gone forth, by that word, (v. 26.) *Let it suffice thee.* With which word, no doubt, a divine power went to reconcile Moses to the will of God, and to bring him to acquiesce in it. If God does not by his providence give us what we desire, yet if by his grace he makes us content without it, it comes much to one. *"Let it suffice thee to have God for thy father, and heaven for thy portion,* though thou hast not every thing thou wouldst have in this world. Be satisfied with this, *God is all-sufficient."*

[2.] He put honour upon his prayer, in directing him not to insist upon his request. *Speak no more to me of this matter.* It intimates that what God does not think fit to grant, we should not think fit to ask; and that God takes such a pleasure in the prayer of the upright, that it is no pleasure to him, no, not in any particular instance, to give a denial to it.

[3.] He promised him a sight of Canaan *from the top of Pisgah,* v. 27. Though he should not have the possession of it, he should have the prospect of it; not to tantalize him, but such a sight of it as would yield him true satisfaction, and would enable him to form a very clear and pleasing idea of that promised land. Probably, Moses had not only his sight preserved for other purposes, but greatly enlarged for this purpose; for if he were not to have such a sight of it as others could not have from the same place, it had been no particular favour to Moses, nor the matter of a promise. Even great believers, in this present state, see heaven but at a distance.

[4.] He provided him a successor, one who should support the honour of Moses, and carry on and

complete that glorious work which the heart of Moses was so much upon, the bringing of Israel to Canaan, and settling them there, (v. 28.) *Charge Joshua, and encourage him* in this work. Those to whom God gives a charge, he will be sure to give encouragement to. And it is a comfort to the church's friends, (when they are dying and going off,) to see God's work likely to be carried on by other hands, when they are silent in the dust.

#### CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, I. A most earnest and pathetic exhortation to obedience, both in general, and in some particular instances, backed with a great variety of very pressing arguments, repeated again and again, and set before them in the most moving and affectionate manner imaginable, v. 1. . . 40. II. The appointing the cities of refuge on that side Jordan, v. 41. . . 43. III. The particular description of the place where Moses delivered the following repetition of the law, v. 44. . . 49.

1. **N**OW therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do *them*, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. 2. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. 3. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you. 4. But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God *are* alive every one of you this day. 5. Behold, I have taught you statutes, and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. 6. Keep, therefore, and do *them*: for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people. 7. For what nation *is there so* great, who *hath* God *so* nigh unto them, as the LORD our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for*? 8. And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? 9. Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; 10. *Specially* the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that* they may teach their children. 11. And ye came near, and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with

fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. 12. And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice. 13. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. 14. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. 15. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) 16. Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female; 17. The likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air; 18. The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth: 19. And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, should'est be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. 20. But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, *even* out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as *ye are* this day. 21. Furthermore, the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance: 22. But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land. 23. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. 24. For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire *even* a jealous God. 25. When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and shalt have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt *yourselves*, and make a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger; 26. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall

utterly be destroyed. 27. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. 28. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. 29. But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. 30. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, *even* in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice, 31. (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he swore unto them. 32. For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon earth, and *ask* from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing *is*, or hath been heard like it? 33. Did *ever* people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? 34. Or hath God assayed to go *and* take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35. Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the LORD *he is* God; *there is* none else besides him. 36. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. 37. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; 38. To drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou *art*, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, *as it is* this day. 39. Know therefore this day, and consider *it* in thine heart, that the LORD *he is* God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there is* none else. 40. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong *thy* days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

This most lively and excellent discourse is so entire, and the particulars of it are so often repeated, that we must take it altogether in the exposition of

it, and endeavour to digest it into proper heads, for we cannot divide it into paragraphs.

I. In general, it is the use and application of the foregoing history; it comes in by way of inference from it, v. 1, *Now therefore hearken, O Israel*. This use we should make of the review of God's providences concerning us, we should by them be quickened and engaged to duty and obedience. The histories of the years of ancient times should in like manner be improved by us.

II. The scope and drift of his discourse is to persuade them to keep close to God, and to his service, and not to forsake him for any other god, nor in any instance to decline from their duty to him. Now observe what he says to them with a great deal of divine rhetoric. 1. By way of exhortation and direction. 2. By way of motive and argument, to enforce his exhortations.

1. See here how he charges and commands them, and shows them *what is good, and what the Lord requires of them*.

(1.) He demands their diligent attention to the word of God, and to the statutes and judgments that were taught them, *Hearken, O Israel*. He means, not only that they must now give him the hearing, but that whenever the book of the law was read to them, or read *by* them, they should be attentive to it. "Hearken to the statutes, as containing the great commands of God, and the great concerns of your own souls, and therefore challenging your utmost attention." At Horeb God had *made them hear his words*, (v. 10.) hear them with a witness; the attention which was then constrained by the circumstances of the delivery, ought ever after to be engaged by the excellency of the things themselves. What God *so spake once*, we should *hear twice*, hear often.

(2.) He charges them to preserve the divine law pure and entire among them, v. 2. Keep it *pure*, and do not *add to it*; keep it *entire*, and do not *diminish from it*. Not in *practice*, so *say* me; "Ye shall not *add*, by committing the evil which the law forbids; nor *diminish*, by omitting the good which the law requires." Not in *opinion*, so others; "Ye shall not *add* your own inventions, as if the divine institutions were defective, nor *introduce*, much less *impose* any rites of religious worship, other than what God has appointed, nor shall ye *diminish*, or set aside, any thing that is appointed, as needless, or superfluous." God's work is perfect, nothing can be *put to it*, or *taken from it*, without making it the worse. See Eccl. 3. 14. The Jews understand it as prohibiting the alteration of the text or letter of the law, even in the least jot or tittle. And to their great care and exactness herein, we are very much indebted, under God, for the purity and integrity of the Hebrew code. We find a fence like this made about the New Testament in the close of it, Rev. 22. 18, 19.

(3.) He charges them to keep God's *commandments*, (v. 2.) to *do them*, (v. 5, 14.) to *keep and do them*, (v. 6.) to *perform the covenant*, v. 13. Hearing must be in order to doing; knowledge in order to practice. God's commandments were the way they must keep in, the rule they must keep to; they must govern themselves by the moral precepts; perform their devotion according to the divine ritual; and administer justice according to the judicial law. He concludes his discourse, (v. 40.) with this repeated charge, *Thou shalt keep his statutes and his commandments which I command thee*. What are laws made for but to be observed and obeyed?

(4.) He charges them to be very strict and careful in their observance of the law, (v. 9.) *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently*, and (v. 15.) *Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves*:

and again, (v. 23.) *Take heed to yourselves.* Those that would be religious, must be very cautious, and walk circumspectly. Considering how many temptations we are compassed about with, and what corrupt inclinations we have in our own bosoms, we have great need to look about us, and to keep our hearts with all diligence. Those cannot walk aright, that walk carelessly, and at all adventures.

(5.) He charges them particularly to take heed of the sin of idolatry, that sin which of all others they would be most tempted to by the customs of the nations, were most addicted to by the corruption of their hearts, and which would be most provoking to God, and of the most pernicious consequences to themselves: *Take good heed, lest in this matter, ye corrupt yourselves,* v. 15, 16. Two sorts of idolatry he cautions them against.

[1.] The worship of images, however by them they might intend to worship the true God, as they had done in the golden calf; so changing the *truth of God into a lie*, and his *glory into shame*. The second commandment is expressly directed against this, and is here enlarged upon, v. 15 . . 18. "Take heed lest ye corrupt yourselves," that is, "lest ye debauch yourselves;" for they that think to make images of God, form in their minds such notions of him as must needs be an inlet to all impieties; and it is intimated that it is a spiritual adultery: "and take heed lest ye destroy yourselves. If any thing ruin you, this will be it. Whatever you do, make no similitude to God, either in a human shape, *male or female*; or in the shape of *any beast or fowl, serpent or fish*;" for the heathen worshipped their gods by images of all these kinds, being either not able to form, or not willing to admit, that plain demonstration which we find, Hos. 8. 6, *The workman made it, therefore it is not God*. To represent an infinite Spirit by an image, and the great Creator by the image of a creature, is the greatest affront we can put upon God, and the greatest cheat we can put upon ourselves.

As an argument against their making images of God, he urges it very much upon them, that when God made himself known to them at Horeb, he did it by a voice of words which sounded in their ears, to teach them that *faith comes by hearing*, and God in the word is *nigh us*; no image was presented to their eye; for to see *God as he is*, is reserved for our happiness in the other world, and to see him as he is not, will do us hurt and no good in this world. Ye saw no similitude, (v. 12.) *no manner of similitude*, v. 15. Probably, they expected to have seen some similitude, for they were ready to *break through unto the Lord to gaze*, Exod. 19. 21. But all they saw, was, *light and fire*, and nothing that they could make an image of; God in infinite wisdom so ordering his manifestation of himself, because of the *peril of idolatry*. It is said indeed of Moses, that he *beheld the similitude of the Lord*, Numb. 12. 8. God allowing him that favour, because he was above the temptation of idolatry; but for the people who were lately come from admiring the idols of Egypt, they must see no resemblance of God, lest they should have pretended to copy it, and so should have received the second commandment in vain; "For" (says Bishop Patrick) "they would have thought that that forbade them only to make any representation of God beside that wherein he showed himself to them, in which they would have concluded it lawful to represent him." Let this be a caution to us, to take heed of making images of God in our fancy and imagination, when we are worshipping him, lest thereby we *corrupt ourselves*. There may be idols in the heart, where there are none in the sanctuary.

[2.] The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, is another sort of idolatry which they are here cau-

tioned against, v. 14. This was the most ancient species of idolatry, and the most plausible, drawing the adoration of those creatures that not only are in a situation above us, but are most sensibly glorious in themselves, and most generally servicable to the world. And the plausibleness of it made it the more dangerous. It is intimated here, *First*, How strong the temptation is to sense; for the caution is, *Lest thou shouldest be driven to worship them*, by the strong impulse of a vain imagination, and the impetuous torrent of the customs of the nations. The heart is supposed to *walk after the eye*, which, in our corrupt and degenerate state, it is very apt to do. "*When thou seest the sun, moon, and stars*, thou wilt so admire their height and brightness, their regular motion and powerful influence, that thou wilt be strongly tempted to give that glory to them, which is due to him that made them, and made them what they are to us; gave them their beings, and made them blessings to the world." It seems, there was need of a great deal of resolution to arm them against this temptation; so weak was their faith in an invisible God and an invisible world. *Secondly*, Yet he shows how weak the temptation would be to those that would use their reason; for these pretended deities, the *sun, moon, and stars*, were only blessings which the Lord their God, whom they were obliged to worship, had imparted to all nations. It is absurd to worship them, for, 1. They were man's servants, were made and ordained to give light on earth; and shall we serve those that were made to serve us? The sun, in Hebrew, is called *Shemesh*, which signifies a *servant*, for it is the minister-general of this visible world, and holds the candle to all mankind; let it not then be worshipped as a lord. 2. They are God's gifts; he has imparted them; whatever benefit we have by them, we owe it to him; it is therefore highly injurious to him, to give that honour and praise to them, which is due to him only.

(6.) He charges them to teach their children to observe the law of God. *Teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons*, (v. 9.) *that they may teach their children*, v. 10. [1.] Care must be taken in general to preserve the entail of religion among them, and to transmit the knowledge and worship of God to posterity: for the kingdom of God in Israel was designed to be perpetual, if they did not forfeit the privilege of it. [2.] Parents must, in order hereunto, particularly take care to teach their own children the fear of God, and to train them up in an observance of all his commandments.

(7.) He charges them never to forget their duty; (v. 23.) *Take heed lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God*. Though God is ever mindful of the covenant, we are apt to forget it; and that is at the bottom of all our departures from God. We have need therefore to watch against all those things which would put the covenant out of our minds, and to watch over our own hearts, lest at any time we let it slip; and so we must take heed lest at any time we forget our religion, lest we lose it or leave it off. Care and caution, and holy watchfulness, are the best helps against a bad memory. These are the directions and commands he gives them.

2. Let us see now what are the motives or arguments with which he backs these exhortations. How does he order the cause before them, and *fill his mouth with arguments*? He has a great deal to say on God's behalf. Some of his topics are indeed peculiar to that people, yet applicable to us. But, upon the whole, it is evident that religion has reason on its side, the powerful charms of which, all that are irreligious willfully stop their ears against.

(1.) He urges the *greatness, glory, and goodness, of God*. Did we consider what a God he is with whom we have to do, we should surely make con-

science of our duty to him, and not dare to sin against him. He reminds them here, [1.] That the Lord Jehovah is the *one only living and true God*. This they must *know and consider*, v. 39. There are many things which we know, but are not the better for, because we do not consider them. We do not apply them to ourselves, nor draw proper inferences from them. This is a truth so evident, that it cannot but be known, and so important, that, if it were duly considered, it would effectually reform the world, *That the Lord Jehovah he is God*, an infinite and eternal Being, self-existent and self-sufficient, and the Fountain of all being, power, and motion; that he is *God in heaven above*, clothed with all the glory, and Lord of all the hosts, of the upper world, and that he is *God upon earth beneath*, which, though distant from the throne of his glory, is not out of the reach of his sight or power; and though despicable and mean, is not below his care and cognizance. And *there is none else*; no true and living God but himself; all the deities of the heathen were counterfeits and usurpers; nor did any of them so much as pretend to be universal monarchs in heaven and earth, but were only local deities. The Israelites who worshipped no other than the supreme *Numen—Divinity*, were for ever inexcusable, if they either changed their God, or neglected him. [2.] That he is a *consuming Fire, a jealous God*, v. 24. "Take heed of offending him, for, *First*, He has a jealous eye to *discern* an affront; he must have your entire affection and adoration, and will by no means endure a rival." God's jealousy over us is a good reason for our godly jealousy over ourselves. *Secondly*, He has a heavy hand to *punish* an affront, especially in his worship, for therein he is in a special manner jealous; he is a *consuming Fire*; his wrath against sinners is so, it is dreadful and destroying, it is a *fiery indignation* which will *devour the adversaries*, Heb. 10. 27. Fire consumes that only which is fuel for it, so the wrath of God fastens upon those only who, by their own sin, have fitted *themselves for destruction*, 1 Cor. 3. 13. Isa. 27. 4. Even in the New Testament we find the same argument urged upon us, as a reason why we should serve *God with reverence*, (Heb. 12. 28, 29.) because though he is our God, and a rejoicing Light to those that serve him faithfully, yet he is a *consuming fire* to those that trifle with him. *Thirdly*, That yet he is a *merciful God*, v. 31. It comes in here as an encouragement to repentance, but might serve as an inducement to obedience, and a consideration proper to prevent their apostasy. Shall we forsake a *merciful God*, who will never *forsake us*, as it follows here, if we be faithful unto him? Whither can we go to mend ourselves? Shall we forget the covenant of our God, who will not *forget the covenant of our fathers*? Let us be held to our duty by the bonds of love, and prevailed with by the *mercies of God* to cleave to him.

(2.) He urges their relation to this God, his authority over them, and their obligations to him. "The commandments you are to keep and do, are not mine," says Moses, "not my inventions, not my injunctions, but they are the commandments of the Lord, framed by infinite wisdom, enacted by sovereign power, he is the *Lord of your fathers*, (v. 1.) so that you are his by inheritance, your fathers were his, and you were born in his house. He is the *Lord your God*, (v. 2.) so that you are his by your own consent. He is the *Lord my God*, (v. 5.) so that I treat with you as his agent and ambassador;" and in his name Moses delivered unto them all that, and that only, which he had received from the Lord.

(3.) He urges the *wisdom of being religious*, (v. 5.) *for this is your wisdom in the sight of the nations*.

In keeping God's commandments, [1.] They would act wisely for themselves. *This is your wisdom*. It is not only agreeable to right reason, but highly conducive to our true interest; this is one of the first and most ancient maxims of divine revelation, *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, Job 28. 28. [2.] They would answer the expectations of their neighbours, who, upon reading or hearing the precepts of the law that was given them, would conclude that certainly the people that were governed by this law, were a *wise and understanding people*. Great things may justly be looked for from those who are guided by divine revelation, and unto whom are *committed the oracles of God*; they must needs be better and wiser than other people; and so they are, if they are ruled by the rules that are given them; and if they are not, though reproach may for their sakes be cast upon the religion they profess, yet it will in the end certainly return upon themselves to their eternal confusion. Those that enjoy the benefit of divine light and laws, ought to conduct themselves so as to support their own *reputation for wisdom and honour*, (see Eccl. 10. 1.) that God may be glorified thereby.

(4.) He urges the singular advantages which they enjoyed by virtue of the happy establishment they were under, v. 7, 8. Our communion with God (which is the highest honour and happiness we are capable of in this world) is kept up by the word and prayer; in both these Israel were happy above any people under heaven.

[1.] Never were any people so privileged in speaking to God, (v. 7.) he was nigh unto them in all that they called upon him for, ready to answer their inquiries, and resolve them by his oracle; ready to answer their requests, and grant them by a particular providence. When they had cried unto God for bread, for water, for healing, they had found him near them, to succour and relieve them, a very present Help, and in the midst of them, (Ps. 46. 1, 5.) his ear open to their prayers. Observe, *First*, It is the character of God's Israel that on all occasions they call upon him, in every thing they make their requests known to God. They do nothing but what they consult him in, they desire nothing but what they come to him for. *Secondly*, Those that call upon God, shall certainly find him within call, and ready to give an answer of peace to every prayer of faith; see Isa. 58. 9. *Thou shalt cry*, as the child from the nurse, *and he shall say, Here I am*, what does my dear child cry for? *Thirdly*, This is a privilege which makes the Israel of God truly great and honourable. What can go further than this to magnify a people, or person? Is any name more illustrious than that of Israel, *a prince with God*? *What nation is there so great*? Other nations might boast of greater numbers, larger territories, and more ancient incorporations; but none could boast of such an interest in heaven as Israel had. They had their gods, but not so nigh to them as Israel's God was; they could not help them in a time of need, as 1 Kings 18. 27.

[2.] Never were any people so privileged in hearing from God by the statutes and judgments which were set before them, (v. 8.) this also was the grandeur of Israel above any people. *What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous*? Observe, *First*, That all these statutes and judgments of the divine law, are infinitely just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. The law of God is far more excellent than the law of nations. No law so consonant to natural equity and the unprejudiced dictates of right reason, so consistent with itself in all the parts of it, and so conducive to the welfare and interest of mankind, as the scripture-law is, Ps. 119. 128. *Secondly*, The having of

these statutes, and judgments set before them, is the true and transcendent greatness of any nation or people. See Ps. 147. 19, 20. It is an honour to us that we have the Bible in reputation and power among us. It is an evidence of a people's being high in the favour of God, and a means of making them high among the nations. They that magnify the law, shall be magnified by it.

(5.) He urges God's glorious appearances to them at mount Sinai, when he gave them this law. This he insists much upon. Take heed *lest thou forget the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb*, v. 10. Some of them were now alive, that could remember it, though they were then under twenty years of age, and the rest of them might be said to stand there in the loins of their fathers, who received the law and entered into covenant there, not for themselves only, but for their children, to whom God had an eye particularly in giving the law; that they might teach it their children.

Two things they must remember, and, one would think, they could never forget them.

[1.] What they *saw* at mount Sinai; (v. 11.) they saw a strange composition of fire and darkness, both dreadful and very awful; and they must needs be a striking foil to each other; the darkness made the fire in the midst of it look the more dreadful. Fires in the night are most frightful, and the fire made the darkness that surrounded it, look the more awful; for it must needs be a strong darkness which such a fire did not disperse. In allusion to this appearance upon mount Sinai, God is said to show himself for his people, and against his and their enemies, in fire and darkness together, Ps. 18. 8, 9. He tells them again, (v. 36.) what they saw, for he would have them never to forget it; he *showed thee his great fire*. One flash of lightning, that fire from heaven, strikes an awe upon us; and some have observed that most creatures naturally turn their face toward the lightning, as ready to receive the impressions of it; but how dreadful then must a constant fire from heaven be! It gave an earnest of the day of judgment, in which *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire*. As he reminds them of what they saw, so he tells them what they saw not; no manner of similitude, from which they might form either an idea of God in their fancies, or an image of God in their high places. By what we see of God, sufficient ground is given us to believe him to be a Being of infinite power and perfection, but no occasion given us to suspect him to have a body such as we have.

[2.] What they *heard* at mount Sinai; (v. 12.) "*The Lord spake unto you with an intelligible voice, in your own language, and you heard it.*" This he enlarges upon toward the close of his discourse, v. 32, 33, 36. *First, They heard the voice of God, speaking out of heaven*. God manifests himself to all the world in the works of creation, without speech or language, and yet their voice is heard; (Ps. 19. 1-3.) but to Israel he made himself known by speech and language, condescending to the weakness of the church's infant state. Here was the *voice of one crying in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord*. *Secondly, They heard it out of the midst of the fire*, which showed that it was God himself that spake to them, for who else could dwell with devouring fire? God spake to Job out of the whirlwind, which was terrible; but to Israel out of the fire, which was more terrible. We have reason to be thankful that he does not thus speak to us, but by men like ourselves, *whose terror shall not make us afraid*, Job 33. 6, 7. *Thirdly, They heard it and yet lived*, v. 33. It was a wonder of mercy that the fire did not devour them, or that they did not die for fear, when

Moses himself trembled. *Fourthly, Never any people heard the like*. He bids them inquire of former days, and distant places, and they would find this favour of God to Israel without precedent or parallel, v. 32. This singular honour done them, called for singular obedience from them. It might justly be expected that they should do more for God than other people, since God had done so much more for them.

(6.) He urges God's gracious appearances for them, in bringing them out of Egypt, from the iron furnace, where they laboured in the fire, forming them into a people, and then taking them to be his own people, *a people of inheritance*; (v. 20.) this he mentions again, v. 34, 37, 38. Never did God do such a thing for any people: the rise of this nation was quite different from the origin of all other nations. [1.] They were thus dignified and distinguished, not for any thing in them that was deserving or inviting, but because God had a kindness for their fathers, he chose them. See the reasons of free grace; we are not beloved for our own sakes, but for his sake who is the great Trustee of the covenant. [2.] They were delivered out of Egypt by miracles and signs, in mercy to them, and in judgment upon the Egyptians, against whom God stretched out his arm, which was signified by Moses's stretching out his hand in summoning the plagues. [3.] They were designed for a happy settlement in Canaan, v. 38. Nations must be driven out from before them, to make room for them, to show how much dearer they were to God than any other people were. Egyptians and Canaanites must both be sacrificed to Israel's honour and interest. They that stand in Israel's light, in Israel's way, shall find that it is at their peril.

(7.) He urges God's righteous appearance against them sometimes for their sins. He specifies the matter of Peor; (v. 3, 4.) this had happened very lately: their eyes had seen but the other day the sudden destruction of those that joined themselves to Baal-peor, and the preservation of those that claved to the Lord; from which they might easily infer the danger of apostasy from God, and the benefit of adherence to him. He also takes notice again of God's displeasure against himself, (v. 21, 22.) *The Lord was angry with me for your sakes*. He mentions this, to try their ingenuousness, whether they would really be troubled for the great prejudice which they had occasioned to their faithful friend and leader. Others' sufferings for our sakes should grieve us more than our own.

(8.) He urges the certain benefit and advantage of obedience. This argument he begins with, (v. 1.) *That ye may live, and go in and possess the land*; and this he concludes with, (v. 40.) *That ye may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee*. He reminds them that they were upon their good behaviour, their prosperity would depend upon their piety. If they kept God's precepts, he would undoubtedly fulfil his promises.

(9.) He urges the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God: That it would undoubtedly be the ruin of their nation. This he enlarges upon, v. 25-31. Where, [1.] He foresees their revolt from God to idols; that in process of time, when they had remained long in the land, and were settled upon their lees, they *would corrupt themselves, and make a graven image*; this was the sin that would most easily beset them, v. 25. [2.] He foretells the judgments of God upon them for this, *Ye shall utterly be destroyed*, (v. 26.) *scattered among the nations*, v. 27. And their sin should be made their punishment, (v. 28.) "*There shall ye serve gods, the work of men's hands*; be compelled to serve them, whether ye will or no; or, through your own sottishness and stupidity, you will find no bet



ter succours to apply yourselves to in your captivity." Those that cast off the duties of religion in their prosperity, cannot expect the comforts of it when they come to be in distress. Justly are they then sent to the *gods whom they have served*, Judg. 10. 14. [3.] Yet he encourages them to hope that God would reserve mercy for them in the latter days; that he would by his judgments upon them bring them to repentance, and take them again into covenant with himself, v. 29. . 31. Where observe, *First*, That whatever place we are in, we may *from thence seek the Lord our God*, though ever so remote from our own land, or from his holy temple. There is no part of this earth that has a gulf fixed between it and heaven. *Secondly*, They, and they only, shall find God to their comfort, who seek him with all their heart, that is, who are entirely devoted to him, and earnestly desirous of his favour, and solicitous to obtain it. *Thirdly*, Afflictions are sent to engage and quicken us to seek God, and, by the grace of God working with them, many are thus reduced to their right mind. "When these things are come upon thee, it is to be hoped that thou wilt *turn to the Lord thy God*, for thou seest what comes of turning from him;" see Dan. 9. 11, 12. *Fourthly*, God's faithfulness to his covenant encourages us to hope that he will not reject us, though we are driven to him by affliction. If we at length remember the covenant, we shall find that he has not forgotten it.

Now let all these arguments be laid together, and then say whether religion has not reason on its side. None cast off the government of their God, but those that have first abandoned the understanding of a man.

41. Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan, toward the sun-rising; 42. That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that, fleeing unto one of these cities, he might live: 43. *Namely*, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites. 44. And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel: 45. These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt, 46. On this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt: 47. And they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which were on this side Jordan, toward the sun-rising; 48. From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon; 49. And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.

Here is,

1. The nomination of the cities of refuge on that side Jordan where Israel now lay encamped. Three

cities were appointed for that purpose, one in the lot of Reuben, another in that of Gad, and another in that of the half tribe of Manasseh, v. 41. . 43. What Moses could do for that people while he was yet with them, he did, to give example to the rulers who were settled, that they might observe them the better when he was gone.

2. The introduction to another sermon that Moses preached to Israel, which we have in the following chapters. Probably, it was preached the next sabbath-day after, when the congregation attended to receive instruction. He had in general exhorted them to obedience in the former chapter; here he comes to repeat the law which they were to observe; for he demands a universal, but not an implicit, obedience. How can we do our duty, if we do not know it? Here therefore he sets the law before them, as the rule they were to work by, the way they were to walk in; sets it before them, as the glass in which they were to see their natural face, that, looking into this perfect law of liberty, they might continue therein. *These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments*, the moral, ceremonial, and judicial, laws, which had been enacted before, when Israel was newly come out of Egypt, and were now repeated *on this side Jordan*, v. 44. . 46. The place where Moses gave them these laws in charge, is here particularly described. It was, (1.) Over-against Beth-peor, an idol-temple of the Moabites, which perhaps Moses sometimes looked toward, with a particular caution to them against the infection of that and other such like dangerous places. (2.) It was upon their new conquests, in the very land which they had got out of the hands of Sihon and Og, and were now actually in possession of, v. 47. Their present triumphs herein were a powerful argument for obedience.

## CHAP. V.

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, v. 1. . 5. II. The particular precepts are repeated; (v. 6. . 21.) with the double delivery of them, both by word and writing, v. 22. III. The settling of the correspondence from thenceforward between God and Israel, by the mediation and ministry of Moses. 1. It was Israel's humble petition that it might be so, v. 23. . 27. 2. It was God's gracious grant that it should be so, v. 28. . 31. And from hence he infers the obligations they were under to obedience, v. 32.

1. **A**ND Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. 2. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even us*, who are all of us here alive this day. 4. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, 5. (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to show you the word of the LORD; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,

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, v. 1. The greatest of them were not above God's command, nor the meanest of them below his cognizance; but they were all concerned to hear what 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*, (Acts 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; (*v. 4.*) *He talked with you face to face. Word to word; so the Chaldee.* Not in dark visions, as of old he spake to the fathers, (Job 4. 12, 13.) but openly and clearly, and so that all the thousands of Israel might hear and understand. He spake 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, (*v. 5.*) and carried messages between them, both for the settling of the preliminaries, (Exod. 19.) and for the exchanging of the ratifications, Exod. 24. Herein Moses was a type of Christ, who *stands between God and man, to show us the word of the Lord*: a blessed Day's-Man, that has laid his hand upon us both, so that we may both hear from God, and speak to him, without trembling.

6. I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 7. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. 8. Thou shalt not make thee *any* graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: 9. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, 10. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 11. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. 12. Keep the sabbath-day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. 13. Six days

thou shalt labour, and do all thy work; 14. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. 15. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day. 16. Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 17. Thou shalt not kill. 18. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. 19. Neither shalt thou steal. 20. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour. 21. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his man-servant, or his maid-servant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's. 22. These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more: and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

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 Phil. 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 Matth. 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; (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; (*v. 15.*) *Remember that thou wast a servant, and God brought thee out.* 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 out-*

*stretched 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 Eccl. 8. 12.

5. The five last commandments are connected or coupled together, which they are not in Exodus; *Neither shalt thou commit adultery, neither shalt thou steal, &c.* Which intimates 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*, Jam. 2. 10, 11.

6. That these commandments were given with a great deal of awful solemnity, v. 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 Rev. 11. 19.

23. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, *even* all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; 24. And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. 25. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. 26. For who is *there* of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived? 27. Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear *it*, and do *it*. 28. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. 29. Oh that there were such a heart in them,

that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! 30. Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. 31. But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it. 32. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. 33. You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and *that it may be well with you*, and *that ye may prolong your days* in the land which ye shall possess.

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," v. 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 from henceforward speak to them by Moses, with a promise that they would hear what he said, as from God himself, and do it, v. 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 these 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, Exod. 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, v. 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, (v. 29.) *O that there were such a heart in them!* [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 it, 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 things 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, v. 31. Here the matter was settled by consent of both parties, that God should from henceforward speak to us by men like ourselves, by Moses and the prophets, by the apostles and the evangelists, whom if we believe not, 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, v. 32, 33. Seeing God had showed 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.*

#### CHAP. VI.

Moses, in this chapter, goes on with his charge to Israel, to be sure to keep up their religion in Canaan. It is much the same with ch. 4. I. His preface is a persuasive to obedience, v. 1. . . 3. II. He lays down the great principles of obedience. The first truth to be believed, That God is one, v. 4. The first duty to be done, To love him with all our heart, v. 5. III. He prescribes the means for keeping up religion, v. 6. . . 9. IV. He cautions them against those things which would be the ruin of religion; abuse of plenty, (v. 10. . . 12.) inclination to idolatry; (v. 14, 15.) and gives them some general precepts, v. 13, 16. . . 18. V. He directs them what instructions to give their children, v. 20. . . 25.

1. **N**OW these *are* the commandments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it: 2. That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. 3. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*, that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

Observe here, 1. That Moses taught the people all that, and that only, which God commanded him

to teach them, v. 1. Thus Christ's ministers are to teach his churches *all that he has commanded*, and neither more nor less, Matth. 28. 20. 2. That the end of their being taught, was, that they might do as they were taught, (v. 1.) *may a keep God's statutes*, (v. 2.) and *observe to do them*, v. 3. Good instructions from parents and ministers will but aggravate our condemnation, if we do not live up to them. 3. That Moses carefully endeavoured to fix them for God and godliness, now that they were entering upon the land of Canaan, that they might be prepared for the comforts of that land, and fortified against the snares of it; and now that they were setting out in the world, might set out well. 4. That the fear of God in the heart will be the most powerful principle of obedience; (v. 2.) *That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God to keep all his statutes*. 5. The entail of religion in a family, or country, is the best entail: it is highly desirable that not we only, but our *children*, and our *children's children*, may fear the Lord. 6. Religion and righteousness advance and secure the prosperity of any people. Fear God, and it shall be well with thee. Those that are well-taught, if they do what they are taught, shall be well-fed too, as Israel in the *land flowing with milk and honey*, v. 3.

4. Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: 5. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7. 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. 8. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. 10. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11. And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive-trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten, and be full; 12. *Then* beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; 15. (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you,) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. 16. Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah.

Here is,

I. A brief summary of religion, containing the

first principles of faith and obedience, v. 4, 5. These two verses the Jews reckon one of the choicest portions of scripture: they write it in their phylacteries, and think themselves not only obliged to say it at least twice every day, but very happy in being so obliged; having this saying among them, *Blessed are we, who every morning and evening say, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.* But more blessed are we, if we duly consider and improve,

1. What we are here taught to *believe concerning God*; That *Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.* (1.) That the God whom we serve, is Jehovah, a Being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient. (2.) That he is the one only living and true God; he only is God, and he is but One. The firm belief of this self-evident truth would effectually arm them against all idolatry, which was introduced by that fundamental error, That there are gods many. It is past dispute, that there is *one God*, and there is *no other but he*, Mark, 12. 23. Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought there is here a plain intimation of the trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; for here is the name of God three times, and yet all declared to be One. Happy they that have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one Master to please, but one Benefactor to seek to. It is better to have one fountain than a thousand cisterns; one all-sufficient God than a thousand insufficient ones.

2. What we are here taught concerning the duty which God requires of man. It is all summed up in this, as its principle, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* He had undertaken (v. 2.) to teach them to fear God; and in pursuance of his undertaking, he here teaches them to love him: for the warmer our affection to him, the greater will be our veneration for him; and the child that honours his parents, no doubt loves them. Did ever any prince make a law that his subjects should love him? Yet such is the condescension of the divine grace, that this is made the first and great commandment of God's law, that we love him, and that we perform all other parts of our duty to him from a principle of love: *My son, give me thine heart.* We must highly esteem him, be well pleased that there is such a Being, well pleased in all his attributes, and relations to us: our desire must be toward him, our delight in him, our dependence upon him, and to him we must be entirely devoted. It must be a constant pleasure to us to think of him, hear from him, speak to him, and serve him. We must love him, (1.) As the Lord, the best of Beings, most excellent and amiable in himself. (2.) As our God, a God in covenant with us, our Father, and the most kind and bountiful of friends and benefactors. We are also commanded to love God *with all our heart, and soul, and might*; that is, We must love him, [1.] With a *sincere* love; not in word and tongue only, saying we love him when our hearts are not with him, but inwardly, and in truth, solacing ourselves in him. [2.] With a *strong* love; the heart must be carried out toward him with great ardour and fervency of affection. Some have from hence thought, that we should avoid saying (as we commonly express ourselves) that we will do this or that, with all our heart; for we must not do any thing with all our heart but love God; and that this phrase being here used concerning that sacred fire, it should not be unhalloed. He that is our All, must have our all, and none but he. [3.] With a *superlative* love; we must love God above any creature whatsoever, and love nothing beside him, but what we love for him, and in subordination to him. [4.] With an *intelligent* love; for so it is explained, Mark 12. 38. To love him with all the heart, and

with all the *understanding*, we must know him, and therefore love him, as those that see good cause to love him. [5.] With an *entire* love; he is one, and therefore our hearts must be united in this love, and the whole stream of our affections must run toward him. O that this love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts!

II. Means are here prescribed for the maintaining and keeping up of religion in our hearts and houses, that it might not wither and go to decay. And they are these:

1. Meditation, v. 6. *These words which I command thee, shall be in thine heart.* Though the words alone without the things will do us no good, yet we are in danger of losing the things if we neglect the words, by which ordinarily divine light and power are conveyed to the heart. God's words must be laid up in our heart, that our thoughts may be daily conversant with them, and employed about them, and thereby the whole soul may be brought to abide and act under the influence and impression of them. This immediately follows upon the law of *loving God with all our heart*; for they that do so, will lay up his word in their hearts, both as an evidence and effect of that love, and as a means to preserve and increase it. He that loves God, loves his Bible.

2. The religious education of children, v. 7. *"Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children; and by communicating thy knowledge thou wilt increase it."* They that love the Lord God themselves, should do what they can to engage the affections of their children to him, and so to preserve the entail of religion in their families from being cut off. *Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children*, so some read it; frequently repeat these things to them, try all ways of instilling them into their minds, and making them pierce into their hearts; as in whetting a knife, it is turned first on this side, then on that. "Be careful and exact in teaching thy children; and aim, as by whetting, to sharpen them, and put an edge upon them. Teach them thy children, not only those of thine own body," (say the Jews,) "but all those that are any way under thy care and tuition." Bishop Patrick well observes here, that Moses thought this law so very plain and easy, that every father might be able to instruct his sons in it, and every mother her daughters. Thus that good thing which is committed to us, we must carefully transmit to those that come after us, that it may be perpetuated.

3. Pious discourse. *"Thou shalt talk of these things, with due reverence and seriousness, for the benefit not only of thy children, but of thy other domestics, thy friends and companions, as thou sittest in thy house, either at work, or at meat, or at rest, or to receive visits; and when thou walkest by the way, either for diversion, or for conversation, or in journeys, when at night thou art retiring from thy family to lie down for sleep, and when in the morning thou art risen up, and returnest to thy family again. Take all occasions to discourse with those about thee of divine things; not of unrevealed mysteries, or matters of doubtful disputation, but of the plain truths and laws of God, and the things that belong to our peace."* So far is it from being reckoned a diminution to the honour of sacred things, to make them the subject of our familiar discourse, that they are recommended to us to be talked of; for the more conversant we are with them, the more we shall admire them, and be affected with them, and may thereby be instrumental to communicate divine light and heat.

4. Frequent reading of the word. *They shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house*, v. 8, 9. It is probable that at that time there were few written co-

pics of the whole law, only at the feast of tabernacles the people had it read to them; and therefore God appointed them, at least for the present, to write some select sentences of the law, that were most weighty and comprehensive, upon their walls, or in scrolls of parchment to be worn about their wrists; and some think that hence the phylacteries, so much used among the Jews, took rise. Christ blames the Pharisees, not for wearing them, but for affecting to have them broader than other people's, Matth. 23. 5. But when Bibles came to be common among them, there was the less occasion for this expedient: It was prudently and piously provided by the first reformers of the English church, that then when Bibles were scarce, some select portions of scripture should be written on the walls and pillars of the churches, which the people might make familiar to them, in conformity to this direction here, which seems to have been binding in the letter of it to the Jews, as it is to us in the intent of it, which is, that we should endeavour by all means possible to make the word of God familiar to us, that we may have it ready to us upon all occasions, for our restraint from sin and our direction and excitement to our duty. It must be as that which is *graven on the palms of our hands*, always before our eyes. See Prov. 3. 1, 3. It is also intimated that we must never be ashamed to own our religion, nor to own ourselves under the check and government of it. Let it be written on our gates, and let every one that goes by our door, read it, That we believe Jehovah to be God alone, and believe ourselves bound to love him with all our hearts.

III. A caution is here given not to forget God in a day of prosperity and plenty, v. 10-12. Here, 1. He raises their expectations of the goodness of their God; taking it for granted that he would bring them into the good land that he had promised, v. 10. That they should no longer dwell in tents as shepherds and poor travellers, but should settle in great and goodly cities; should no longer wander in a barren wilderness, but should enjoy houses well-furnished, and gardens well-planted; (v. 11.) and all this without any care or expense of their own, which he here lays a great stress upon, *Cities which thou buildedst not, Houses which thou filledst not*, &c. both because it made the mercy really much more valuable, that what they had, came to them so cheap; and yet if they did not actually consider it, the mercy would be the less esteemed, for we are most sensible of the value of that which has cost us dear. When they came so easily by the gift, they would be apt to grow secure, and unmindful of the Giver. 2. He engages their watchfulness against the badness of their own hearts; *then beware*, when thou liest safe and soft, *lest thou forget the Lord*, v. 12. Note, (1.) In a day of prosperity we are in great danger of forgetting God, our dependence upon him, our need of him, and our obligations to him. When the world smiles, we are apt to make our court to it, and expect our happiness in it, and so we forget him that is our only Portion and Rest. Agur prays against this temptation, (Prov. 30. 9.) *Lest I be full and deny thee*. (2.) There is therefore need of great care and caution at such a time, and strict watch over our own hearts. "Then beware; being warned of your danger, stand upon your guard against it. Bind the words of God for a sign upon thy hand, for this end, to prevent thy forgetting God. When thou art settled in Canaan, forget not thy deliverance out of Egypt: but look to the rock out of which thou wast hewn: when thy latter end is greatly increased, remember the smallness of thy beginnings."

IV. Some special precepts and prohibitions are here given, which are of great consequence. 1. They must upon all occasions give honour to God,

(v. 13.) *fear him and serve him*, (for if he be a Master, we must both reverence him and do his work,) *and swear by his name*; that is, they must not upon any occasion appeal to any other, as the Discerner of truth, and Avenger of wrong. Swear by him *only*, and not by any idol, or any other creature. *Swear by his name* in all treaties and covenants with the neighbouring nations, and do not compliment them so far as to swear by their gods. *Swearing by his name*, is sometimes put for an open profession of his name; Isa. 45. 23. *Every tongue shall swear*, is expounded, (Rom. 14. 11.) *Every tongue shall confess to God*. 2. They must not upon any occasion give that honour to other Gods; (v. 14.) *Ye shall not go after other gods*, that is, "Ye shall not serve or worship them," for therein they went astray, they went a whoring from the true God, who, in this, more than in any thing, is a *jealous God*; (v. 15.) and the learned Bishop Patrick observes here, out of Maimonides, that we never find, either in the law or the prophets, *anger*, or *fury*, or *jealousy*, or *indignation*, attributed to God but upon occasion of idolatry. 3. They must take heed of dishonouring God by *tempting him*, (v. 16.) *Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God*, that is, "Ye shall not in any exigence distrust the power, presence, and providence, of God, nor quarrel with him; which, if they indulged an evil heart of unbelief, they would take occasion to do in Canaan as well as in the wilderness. No change of condition will cure a disposition to murmur and fret. Our Saviour uses this caution as an answer to one of Satan's temptations, with application to himself, Matth. 4. 7. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*; either by despairing of his power and goodness, while we keep in the way of our duty, or by presuming upon it, when we turn aside out of that way.

17. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. 18. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers; 19. To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken. 20. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? 21. Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: 22. And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household before our eyes: 23. And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. 24. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. 25. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.



Here,

I. Moses charges them to keep God's commandments themselves, (v. 17. . 19.) *Ye shall diligently keep God's commandments.* Note, It requires a great deal of care and pains to keep up religion in the power of it in our hearts and lives. Negligence will ruin us; but we cannot be saved without diligence. To induce them to this, he here shows them, 1. That this would be very acceptable to God, it is *right and good in the sight of the Lord*: and that is *right and good* indeed, that is so in *God's sight*. If we have any regard to the favour of our Creator as our felicity, and the law of our creation as our rule, we shall be religious. 2. That it would be very advantageous and profitable to themselves. It would secure to them the possession of the land of Canaan, prosperity there, and constant victory over those that stood in their way. In short, Do well, and it shall be *well with thee*.

II. He charges them to instruct their children in the commands of God; not only that they might in their tender years intelligently and affectionately join in religious services, but that afterward they might in their day keep up religion, and convey it to those that should come after them.

Now, 1. Here is a proper question, which it is supposed the children would ask, (v. 20.) "*What mean the testimonies and the statutes?* What is the meaning of the feasts we observe, the sacrifices we offer, and the many peculiar customs we keep up?" Observe, (1.) All divine institutions have a certain meaning, and there is something great designed in them. (2.) It concerns us to know and understand the meaning of them, that we may perform a reasonable service, and may not *offer the blind for sacrifice*. (3.) It is good for children betimes to inquire into the true intent and meaning of the religious observances they are trained up in. To be thus inquisitive in divine things, is a good sign that they are concerned about them, and a good means of their attaining to a great acquaintance with them. *Then shall we know, if thus we follow on to know.*

2. Here is a full answer put into the parents' mouths to be given to this good question. Parents and teachers must give instruction to those under their charge, though they do not ask it. Nay, though they have an aversion to it; much more must they be ready to answer questions, and to give instruction when it is desired; for it may be hoped, they that *ask it*, will be willing to *receive it*. Did the children ask the meaning of God's laws? Let them be told, That they were to be observed, (1.) In a grateful remembrance of God's former favours to them, especially their deliverance out of Egypt, v. 21. . 23. The children must be often told of the deplorable state their ancestors were in, when they were bondmen in Egypt, the great salvation God wrought for them in fetching them out thence, and that God, in giving them these peculiar statutes, meant to perpetuate the memorial of that work of wonder, by which they were formed into a peculiar people. (2.) As the prescribed condition of his further favours, (v. 24.) *The Lord commanded us all these statutes for our good.* Note, God commands us nothing but what is really for *our own good*. It is our interest, as well as our duty, to be religious. [1.] It will be *our life*; that he might *preserve us alive*; which is a great favour, and more than we could expect, considering how often we have forfeited life itself. Godliness has the promise of the continuance and comfort of the life that now is, as far as it is for God's glory. [2.] It will be our *righteousness*. Could we perfectly fulfil but that one command of loving God with all our heart, soul, and might, and could we say, "We have never done otherwise," that would be so our righteousness, as to entitle us to the benefits of the covenant of in-

nocency, had we continued in every thing that is written in the book of the law to do it, the law would have justified us. But that we cannot pretend to, therefore our sincere obedience shall be accepted through a Mediator to denominate us, as Noah was, *righteous before God*, Gen. 7. 1. Luke 1. 6. and 1 John 3. 7. The Chaldee reads it, *There shall be a reward to us, if we observe to do these commandments*; for, without doubt, in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

## CHAP. VII.

Moses in this chapter exhorts Israel. I. In general, to keep God's commandments, v. 11, 12. II. In particular, and in order to that, to keep themselves pure from all communion with idolaters. 1. They must utterly destroy the seven devoted nations, and not spare them or make leagues with them, v. 1, 2, 16, 24. 2. They must by no means marry with the remainders of them, v. 3, 4. 3. They must deface and consume their altars and images, and not so much as take the silver and gold of them to their own use, v. 5, 25, 26. To enforce this charge, he shows that they were bound to do so, (1.) In duty. Considering, [1.] Their election to God, v. 6. [2.] The reason of that election, v. 7, 8. [3.] The terms they stood upon with God, v. 9, 10. (2.) In interest. It is here promised, [1.] In general, that if they would serve God, he would bless and prosper them, v. 12. . 15. [2.] In particular, that if they would drive out the nations that they might not be a temptation to them, God would drive them out that they should not be any vexation to them, v. 17. . 24.

1. **W**HEN the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou: 2. And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them: thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: 3. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. 5. But thus shall ye deal with them: ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. 6. For thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 7. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; 8. But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you

out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; 10. And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. 11. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

Here is,

I. A very strict caution against all friendship and fellowship with idols and idolaters. These that are taken into communion with God, must have no communication with the unfruitful works of darkness. These things they are charged about, for the preventing of this snare now before them.

1. They must *show them no mercy*, v. 1, 2. Bloody work is here appointed them, and yet it is God's work, and good work, and in its time and place needful, acceptable, and honourable.

(1.) God here engages to do his part. It is spoken of as a thing taken for granted, that God would *bring them into the land of promise*, that he would cast out the nations before them, who were the present occupants of that land; no room was left to doubt of that. His power is irresistible, and therefore he *can* do it: his promise is inviolable, and therefore he *will* do it. Now, [1.] These devoted nations are here named and numbered, v. 1. *Seven* in all, and seven to one seemed to make it a very unequal contest. They are specified, that Israel might know the bounds and limits of their commission; hitherto their severity must come, but no further; nor must they, under colour of this commission, kill all that came in their way; no, here must its waves be stayed. The confining of this commission to the nations here mentioned, plainly intimates that after ages were not to draw this into a precedent; this will not serve to justify those barbarous wars which give no quarter. How agreeable soever this method might be, when God himself prescribed it, to that dispensation under which such multitudes of beasts were killed and burned in sacrifice; now that all sacrifices of atonement are perfected in, and superseded by, the great propitiation made by the blood of Christ, human blood is become perhaps more precious than it was, and those that have most power, yet must not be prodigal of it. [2.] They are here owned to be greater and mightier than Israel. They had been long rooted in this land to which Israel came strangers; they were more numerous, had men much more bulky, and more expert in war, than Israel had; yet all this shall not prevent their being cast out before Israel. The strength of Israel's enemies magnifies the power of Israel's God, who will certainly be too hard for them.

(2.) He engages them to do their part. Thou shalt *smite them, and utterly destroy them*, v. 2. If God cast them out, Israel must not take them in, no, not as tenants, or tributaries, or servants. No covenant of any kind must be made with them, no mercy must be showed them. This severity was appointed, [1.] In order to punish the wickedness they and their fathers had been guilty of. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and the longer it had been in the filling, the sorer was the vengeance when it came at last. [2.] In order to prevent the mischiefs they would do God's Is-

rael, if they were left alive. The people of these abominations must not be mingled with the holy seed, lest they corrupt them. Better that all these lives should be lost from the earth, than that religion and the true worship of God should be lost in Israel. Thus we must deal with our lusts that war against our souls; God has delivered them into our hands by that promise, *Sin shall not have dominion over you*, unless it be your own faults; let not us then make covenants with them, or show them any mercy, but mortify and crucify them, and utterly destroy them.

2. They must make no marriages with those of them that escaped the sword, v. 3, 4. The families of the Canaanites were ancient, and it is probable that some of them were called *honourable*, which might be a temptation to the Israelites, especially those of them that were of least note in their tribes, to court an alliance with them, to mend their blood; and the rather, because their acquaintance with the country might be serviceable to them in the improvement of it: but religion, and the fear of God, must overrule all these considerations. To intermarry with them was *therefore* unlawful, because it was dangerous; this very thing had proved of fatal consequence to the old world, (Gen. 6. 2.) and thousands in the world that now is, have been undone by irreligious, ungodly, marriages; for there is more ground of fear in mixed marriages that the good will be *perverted*, than of hope that the bad will be *converted*. The event proved the reasonableness of this warning, *They will turn away thy son from following me*. Solomon paid dear for his folly herein. We find a national repentance for this sin of marrying strange wives, and care taken to reform, (Ezra 10. 19, &c. and Neh. 13.) and a New Testament caution not to be *unequally yoked with unbelievers*, 2 Cor. 6. 14. Those that in choosing yokefellows, keep not at least within the bounds of a justifiable profession of religion, cannot promise themselves helps meet for them. One of the Chaldee paraphrases adds here, as a reason of this command, (v. 3.) *For he that marries with idolaters, does in effect marry with their idols*.

3. They must destroy all the relics of their idolatry, v. 5. Their altars and pillars, their groves and graven images, all must be destroyed; both in a holy indignation against idolatry, and to prevent infection. This command was given before, Exod. 23. 24.—34. 13. A great deal of good work of this kind was done by the people, in their pious zeal, (2 Chron. 31. 1.) and by good Josiah, (2 Chron. 34. 3, 7.) and with this may be compared the burning of the conjuring books, Acts 19. 19.

II. Here are very good reasons to enforce this caution.

1. The choice which God had made of this people for his own, v. 6. There was such a covenant and communion established between God and Israel, as was not between him and any other people in the world. Shall they by their idolatries dishonour him who had thus honoured them? Shall they slight him who had thus testified his kindness for them? Shall they put themselves upon the level with other people, when God had thus dignified and advanced them above all people? Had God taken them to be a special people to him, and no other; but them, and will not they take God to be a special God to them, and no other but him?

2. The freeness of that grace, which made this choice. (1.) There was nothing in them to recommend or entitle them to this favour. *In the multitude of the people is the king's honour*, Prov. 14. 28. But their number was inconsiderable; they were only seventy souls when they went down into Egypt, and though greatly increased there, yet there were many other nations more numerous; Yr

were the fewest of all people, v. 7. The author of the Jerusalem Targum passes too great a compliment upon his nation, in his reading this, *Ye were humble in spirit, and meek above all people*; quite contrary. They were rather stiff-necked, and ill-natured, above all people. (2.) God fetched the reason of it purely from himself, v. 8. [1.] He loved you, *because he would love you*. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes. All that God loves, he loves freely, Hos. 14. 4. Those that perish, perish by their own merits, but all that are saved, are saved by prerogative. [2.] He has done his work because he would keep his word. "He has brought you out of Egypt in pursuance of the oath sworn to your fathers." Nothing in them, or done by them, did or could make God a Debtor to them; but he had made himself a debtor to his own promise, which he would perform notwithstanding their unworthiness.

3. The tenor of the covenant into which they were taken; it was in short this, That as they were to God, so God would be to them. They should certainly find him, (1.) *Kind to his friends*, v. 9. "The Lord thy God is not like the gods of the nations, the creatures of fancy, subjects fit enough for loose poetry, but no proper objects of serious devotion; no, he is God, God indeed, God alone, the faithful God, able and ready not only to fulfil his own promises, but to answer all the just expectations of his worshippers, and he will certainly keep covenant and mercy," that is, "show mercy according to covenant, to them that love him, and keep his commandments; (and in vain do we pretend to love him, if we do not make conscience of his commandments; "and this," (as is here added for the explication of the promise in the second commandment,) "not only to thousands of persons, but to thousands of generations. So inexhaustible is the fountain, so constant the streams!" (2.) Just to his enemies, he *repayeth them that hate him*, v. 10. Note, [1.] Wilful sinners are haters of God; for the carnal mind is enmity against him. Idolaters are so in a special manner, for they are in league with his rivals. [2.] Those that hate God, cannot hurt him, but certainly ruin themselves. He will repay them to their face, in defiance of them and all their impotent malice. His arrows are said to be made ready against the face of them, Ps. 21. 12. Or, He will bring those judgments upon them, which shall appear to themselves to be the just punishment of their idolatry. Compare Job 21. 19, *He rewardeth him, and he shall know it*. Though vengeance seem to be slow, yet it is not slack. The wicked and sinner shall be recompensed in the earth, Prov. 11. 31. I cannot pass the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon this place, because it speaks the faith of the Jewish church concerning a future state: *He recompenses to them that hate him, the reward of their good works in this world, that he may destroy them in the world to come*.

12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers: 13. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. 14. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female

barren among you, or among your cattle. 15. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. 16. And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that *will be* a snare unto thee. 17. If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I possess them? 18. Thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; 19. The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched-out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out; so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. 20. Moreover, the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed. 21. Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible. 22. And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beast of the field increase upon thee. 23. But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. 24. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. 25. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God. 26. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.

Here,

1. The caution against idolatry is repeated, and against communion with idolaters, v. 16. "Thou shalt consume the people, and not serve their gods." We are in danger of having fellowship with the works of darkness, if we take pleasure in fellowship with those that do those works. Here is also a repetition of the charge to *destroy the images*, v. 25, 26. The idols which the heathen had worshipped were an abomination to God, and therefore must be so to them: all that truly love God, hate what he hates. Observe how this is urged upon them, *Thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it*: such a holy indignation as this must we conceive against sin, that *abominable thing*

which the Lord hates. They must not retain the images, to gratify their covetousness, *Thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them*, nor think it pity to have that destroyed. Achan paid dear for converting that to his own use, which was an anathema. Nor must they retain the images, to gratify their curiosity; "Neither shalt thou bring it into thine house, to be hung up as an ornament, or preserved as a monument of antiquity: No, to the fire with it, that is the fittest place for it." Two reasons are given for this caution. *Lest thou be snared therein*; (v. 25.) that is, "Lest thou be drawn, ere thou art aware, to like it and love it, to fancy it, and pay respect to it." And, *lest thou be a cursed thing like it*, v. 26. They that make images, are said to be like unto them, stupid and senseless; here they are said to be in a worse sense like to them, accursed of God, and devoted to destruction. Compare these two reasons together, and observe, That whatever brings us into a snare, brings us under a curse.

II. The promise of God's favour to them, if they would be obedient, is enlarged upon with a most affecting copiousness and fluency of expression, which intimates how much it is both God's desire, and our own interest, that we be religious. All possible assurance is here given them,

1. That if they would sincerely endeavour to do their part of the covenant, God would certainly perform his part. He shall keep the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers, v. 12. Let us be constant to our duty, and we cannot question the constancy of God's mercy.

2. That if they would love God, and serve him, and devote themselves and their's to him, he would love them, and bless them, and multiply them greatly, v. 13, 14. What could they desire more to make them happy? (1.) *He will love thee*. He began in love to us, (1 John 4. 21.) and if we return his love in filial duty, then, and then only, we may expect the continuance of it, John 14. 21. (2.) He will bless thee with the tokens of his love above all people. If they would distinguish themselves from their neighbours by singular services, God would dignify them above their neighbours by singular blessings. (3.) He will multiply thee. Increase was the ancient blessing for the peopling of the world, once and again, (Gen. 1. 28.—9. 1.) and here for the peopling of Canaan, that little world by itself. The increase both of their families and of their stock is promised: They should neither have estates without heirs, nor heirs without estates, but should have the complete satisfaction of having many children, and plentiful provisions and portions for them.

3. That if they would keep themselves pure from the idolatries of Egypt, God would keep them clear from the diseases of Egypt, v. 15. It seems to refer not only to those plagues of Egypt, by the force of which they were delivered, but to some other epidemical country disease, (as we call it,) which they remembered the prevalence of among the Egyptians, and by which God had chastised them for their national sins. Diseases are God's servants; they go where he sends them, and do what he bids them. It is therefore good for the health of our bodies, to mortify the sin of our souls.

4. That if they would cut off the devoted nations, they should cut them off, and none should be able to stand before them. Their duty in this matter would itself be their advantage. *Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee*, that is the precept, v. 16. And then the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them, that is the promise, v. 23. Thus we are commanded not to let sin reign, not to indulge ourselves in it, or give countenance to it, but to hate

it, and strive against it; and then God has promised that *sin shall not have dominion over us*, (Rom. 6. 12, 14.) but that we shall be more than conquerors over it.

The difficulty and doubtfulness of the conquest of Canaan having been a stone of stumbling to their fathers, he here animates them against those things which were most likely to discourage them, bidding them not to be afraid of them, v. 18. And again, v. 21.

(1.) Let them not be disheartened by the number and strength of their enemies. *Say not, they are more than I, how can I dispossess them?* v. 17. We are apt to think that the most numerous, must needs be victorious; but to fortify them against this temptation, he reminds them of the destruction of Pharaoh and all the power of Egypt, v. 18, 19. They had seen the great temptations, or miracles, (so the Chaldee reads it,) the signs and wonders, wherewith God had brought them out of Egypt, in order to his bringing of them into Canaan, and from thence might easily infer, that God could dispossess the Canaanites, who, though formidable enough, had not such advantages against Israel as the Egyptians had; He that had done the greater, could do the lesser: and they might also infer, that he would dispossess them, otherwise his bringing Israel out of Egypt had been no kindness to them. He that begun would finish. Thou shalt therefore well remember this, v. 18. The word and works of God are then well remembered, when they are improved as helps to our faith and obedience. This is well laid up, which is ready to us when we have occasion to use it.

(2.) Let them not be disheartened by the weakness and deficiency of their own forces; for God will send them in auxiliary troops of *hornets*, or *wasps*, as some read it, (v. 20.) probably, larger than ordinary, which would so terrify and molest their enemies, (and perhaps be the death of many of them,) that their most numerous armies would become an easy prey to Israel. God plagued the Egyptians with flies, but the Canaanites with hornets. These who take not warning by lesser judgments on others, may expect greater on themselves. But their great encouragement was, that they had God among them, a mighty God and terrible, v. 21. And if God be for us, if God be with us, we need not fear the power of any creature against us.

(3.) Let them not be disheartened by the slow progress of their arms, nor think that the Canaanites would never be subdued, if they were not expelled the first year; no, they must be put out by little and little, and not all at once, v. 22. Note, We must not think, that because the deliverance of the church, and the destruction of its enemies, are not effected immediately, therefore it will never be effected; God will do his own work in his own method and time; and we may be sure that they are always the best. Thus corruption is driven out of the hearts of believers by little and little. The work of sanctification is carried on gradually; but that judgment will at length be brought forth into a complete victory. The reason here given (as before, Exod. 23. 29, 30.) is *Lest the beast of the field increase upon thee*. The earth God has given to the children of men; and therefore there shall rather be a remainder of Canaanites to keep possession till Israel become numerous enough to replenish it, than that it should be a habitation of dragons, and a court for the wild beasts of the desert, Isa. 34. 13, 14. Yet God could have prevented this mischief from the beasts, Lev. 26. 6. But pride and security, and other sins that are the common effects of a settled prosperity, were the enemies more dangerous than the beasts of the field, that would be apt to increase upon them. See Judges 3. 1, 4.

## CHAP. VIII.

Moses had charged parents, in teaching their children, to *whet* the word of God upon them, (ch. 6, 7.) by frequent repetition of the same things, over and over again; and here he himself takes the same method of instructing the Israelites, as his children; frequently inculcating the same precepts and cautions, with the same motives, or arguments, to enforce them; that what they heard so often, might abide with them. In this chapter Moses gives them, I. General exhortations to obedience, v. 1, 6. II. A review of the great things God had done for them in the wilderness, as a good argument for obedience, v. 2..5. and v. 15, 16. III. A prospect of the good land into which God would now bring them, v. 7..9. IV. A necessary caution against the temptations of a prosperous condition, v. 10..14, and 17, 18. V. A fair warning to the fatal consequences of apostasy from God, v. 19, 20.

1. **A**LL the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. 2. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know,) that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. 4. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. 5. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, *so* the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. 6. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. 7. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land; a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; 8. A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey; 9. A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any *thing* in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

The charge here given them, is the same as before, to keep and do all God's commandments. Their obedience must be, 1. Careful, *observe to do*. 2. Universal, *to do all the commandments*, v. 1. And, 3. From a good principle, with a regard to God, as the Lord, and their God, and particularly with a holy fear of him, (v. 6.) from a reverence of his majesty, a submission to his authority, and a dread of his wrath.

To engage them to this obedience, beside the great advantages of it, (which he sets before them, v. 1.) that they should *live and multiply*, and all should be well with them; he directs them,

I. To look back upon the wilderness through which God had now brought them, (v. 2.) *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God*

*led thee these forty years in the wilderness*. Now that they were come of age, and were entering upon their inheritance, they must be reminded of the discipline they had been under during their minority, and the method God had taken to train them up for himself. The wilderness was the school in which they had been for forty years boarded and taught, under tutors and governors; and this was a time to bring it all to remembrance. The occurrences of these last forty years were, 1. Very memorable, and well worthy to be remembered. 2. Very useful and profitable to be remembered, as yielding a complication of arguments for obedience. And, 3. They were recorded on purpose that they might be remembered. As the feast of the passover was a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, so the feast of tabernacles was, of their passage through the wilderness. Note, It is very good for us to remember all the ways both of God's providence and grace, by which he has led us hitherto through this wilderness, that we may be prevailed with cheerfully to serve him and trust in him. Here let us set up our Ebenezer.

(1.) They must remember the straits they were sometimes brought into; [1.] For the mortifying of their pride; it was to *humble* them, that they might not be exalted above measure with the abundance of miracles that were wrought in their favour, and that they might not be secure, and confident of being in Canaan immediately. [2.] For the manifesting of their perverseness; *to prove* them, that they and others might know (for God himself perfectly knew it before) all that was in their heart, and might see that God chose them, not for any thing in them that might recommend them to his favour, for their whole carriage was untoward and provoking. Many commandments God gave them which there had been no occasion for, if they had not been led through the wilderness, as those relating to the manna, (Exo d. 16. 28.) and God thereby tried them, as our first parents were tried by the trees of the garden, whether they would keep God's commandments or not. Or, God thereby proved them whether they would trust his promises, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, and, in dependence on his promises, obey his precepts.

(2.) They must remember the supplies which were always granted them. God himself took particular care of their food, raiment, and health; and what would they have more?

[1.] They had manna for food, (v. 3.) *God suffered them to hunger*, and then *fed them with manna*, that the extremity of their want might make their supply the more acceptable, and God's goodness to them therein the more remarkable. God often brings his people low, that he might have the honour of helping them. And thus the manna of heavenly comforts is given to them that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, Matth. 5. 6. *To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*. It is said of the manna, that it was a sort of food, which neither *they nor their fathers knew*. And again, v. 16. If they knew there was such a thing that fell sometimes with the dew in those countries, as some think they did, yet it was never known to fall in such vast quantities, so constantly, and at all seasons of the year, so long, and only about a certain place. These things were altogether miraculous, and without precedent; *the Lord created a new thing* for their supply. And hereby he taught them, *that man liveth not by bread alone*; though God has appointed bread for the strengthening of man's heart, and that is ordinarily made the staff of life, yet God can, when he pleases, command support and nourishment without it, and make something else, very unlikely, to answer the intention as well. We



might live upon air, if it were sanctified for that use by the word of God; for the means God ordinarily uses he is not tied to, but can perform his kind purposes to his people without them. Our Saviour quotes this scripture in answer to that temptation of Satan, *Command that these stones be made bread*. "What need of that?" says Christ; "my heavenly Father can keep me alive without bread." Matth. 4. 3, 4. Let none of God's children distrust their Father, nor take any sinful indirect course for the supply of their own necessities; some way or other, God will provide for them in the way of duty and honest diligence, and *verily they shall be fed*. It may be applied spiritually; the word of God, as it is the revelation of God's will and grace duly received, and entertained by faith, is the food of the soul; the life which is supported by that is the life of the man, and not only that life which is supported by bread. The manna typified Christ, the bread of life. He is the Word of God; by him we live; the Lord evermore give us that bread which endures to eternal life, and let us not be put off with the meat that perisheth!

[2.] The same clothes served them from Egypt to Canaan; at least the generality of them. Though they had not change of raiment, yet it was always new, and waxed not old upon them, v. 4. This was a standing miracle, and the greater, if, as the Jews say, they grew with them, so as to be always fit for them. But it is plain they brought out of Egypt bundles of clothes on their shoulders, (Exod. 12. 34.) which they might barter with each other as there was occasion; and those, with what they wore, sufficed till they came into a country where they could furnish themselves with new clothes.

Now by the method God took of providing food and raiment for them, *First*, He humbled them. It was a mortification to them to be tied for forty years together to the same meat, without any varieties, and to the same clothes, in the same fashion. Thus he taught them that the good things he designed for them, were figures of better things: and that the happiness of man consists not in being clothed in purple or fine linen, and in *living sumptuously every day*, but in being taken into covenant and communion with God, and in *learning his righteous judgments*. God's law, which was given to Israel in the wilderness, must be to them instead of food and raiment. *Secondly*, He proved them, whether they could trust him to provide for them then, when means and second causes failed. Thus he taught them to live in a dependence upon Providence, and not to perplex themselves with care, *what they should eat and drink, and wherewithal they should be clothed*. Christ would have his disciples learn the same lesson, (Matth. 6. 25.) and took a like method to teach it them, when he *sent them out without purse or scrip*, and yet took care that they *lacked nothing*, Luke 22. 35. *Thirdly*, God took care of their health and ease. Though they travelled on foot in a dry country, the way rough and untrodden, yet their *foot swelled not*: God preserved them from taking hurt by the inconveniences of their journey; and mercies of that kind we ought to acknowledge. Note, Those that follow God's conduct are not only safe but easy. Our feet swell not while we keep in the way of duty; it is the way of transgression that is hard, Prov. 13. 15. God has promised to *keep the feet of his saints*, 1 Sam. 2. 9.

(3.) They must also remember the rebukes they had been under, v. 5. During these years of their education they had been kept under a strict discipline, and not without need. *As a man chasteneth his son*, for his good, and because he loves him, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. God is a loving tender Father to all his children, yet when there is

occasion they shall feel the smart of the rod. Israel did so, they were chastened that they might not be condemned; chastened with the rod of men. Not as a man wounds and slays his enemies whose destruction he aims at, but as a man chastens his son whose happiness and welfare he designs: so did their God chasten them; he chastened and taught them, Ps. 94. 12. This they must consider in their heart, that is, they must own it from their own experience, that God had corrected them with a fatherly love, for which they must return to him a filial reverence and compliance. Because God has chastened thee as a father, *Therefore* (v. 6.) *thou shalt keep his commandments*. This use we should make of all our afflictions; by them let us be engaged and quickened to our duty. Thus they are directed to look back upon the wilderness.

II. He directs them to look forward to Canaan, into which way God was now bringing them. Look which way we will, both our reviews and our prospects will furnish us with arguments for obedience. The land which they were now going to take possession of, is here described to be a very good land, v. 7. 9. There was every thing in it that was desirable. 1. It was well watered, like Eden, the garden of the Lord. It was a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, which contributed to the fruitfulness of the soil. Perhaps there was more plenty of water there now than had been in Abraham's time, the Canaanites having found and digged wells; so that Israel reaped the fruit of their industry as well as of God's bounty. 2. The ground produced great plenty of all good things, not only for the necessary support, but for the convenience and comfort of human life. In their fathers' land they had bread enough; it was corn land, and a land of wheat and barley, where, with the common care and labour of the husbandman, they might eat bread without scarceness. It was a fruitful land, that was never turned into barrenness but for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein. They had not only water enough to quench their thirst, but vines, the fruit whereof was ordained to make glad the heart. And if they were desirous of dainties, they needed not to send to far countries for them, when their own was so well stocked with fig-trees, and pomegranates, olives of the best kind, and honey, or date-trees, as some think it should be read. 3. Even the bowels of its earth were very rich, though it should seem that silver and gold they had none; of these the princes of Sheba should bring presents; (Ps. 72. 15.) yet they had plenty of those more serviceable metals, iron and brass. Iron-stone and mines of brass were found in their hills. See Job 28. 2.

Now observe these things are mentioned, (1.) To show the great difference between that wilderness through which God had led them, and the good land into which he was bringing them. Note, Those that bear the inconveniences of an afflicted state with patience and submission, are humbled by them, and prove well under them, are best prepared for better circumstances. (2.) To show what obligations they lay under to keep God's commandments, both in gratitude for his favour to them, and from a regard to their own interest, that the favours might be continued. The only way to keep possession of this good land, would be to keep in the way of their duty. (3.) To show what a figure it was of good things to come. Whatever others saw, it is probable that Moses in it saw a type of the better country: the gospel-church is the New Testament Canaan, watered with the Spirit in his gifts and graces, planted with the trees of righteousness, bearing the fruits of righteousness. Heaven is the good land, in which there is nothing wanting, and where there is a fulness of joy.



10. When thou hast eaten, and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee.

11. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: 12. Lest, when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; 13. And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; 14. Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; 15. Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; 16. Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; 17. And thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand, hath gotten me this wealth. 18. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. 19. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish. 20. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

Moses having mentioned the great plenty they would find in the land of Canaan, finds it necessary to caution them against the abuse of that plenty, which is a sin they would be the more prone to, now that they came into that vineyard of the Lord, immediately out of a barren desert.

1. He directs them to the duty of a prosperous condition, v. 10. They are allowed to eat even to fulness; but not to surfeit or excess. But let them always remember their Benefactor, the Founder of their feast, and never fail to give thanks after meat, *Then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.* 1. They must take heed of eating or drinking so much as to indispose themselves for this duty of blessing God, rather they must aim to serve God therein with so much the more cheerfulness and enlargement. 2. They must not have any fellowship with those that, when they had eaten and were full, blessed false gods, as the Israelites themselves had done in their worship of the golden calf, Exod. 32. 6. 3. Whatever they had the comfort of, God must have the glory of. As our Saviour has taught us to bless before we eat, (Matth. 14. 19. 20.) so we are here taught to bless after meat. That is our *Hosannah, God bless*; this is our *Hallelujah, Blessed be God. In every thing we must give thanks.* From this

law the religious Jews took up a laudable usage of blessing God, not only at their solemn meals, but upon other occasions; if they drank of a cup of wine they lifted up their hands and said, *Blessed be he that created the fruit of the vine to make glad the heart.* If they did but smell at a flower, they said, *Blessed be he that made this flower sweet.* 4. When they gave thanks for the fruits of the land, they must give thanks for the good land itself, which was given them by promise. From all our comfortable enjoyments we must take occasion to thank God for comfortable settlements; and I know not but we of this nation have as much reason as they had to give thanks for a good land.

II. He arms them against the temptations of a prosperous condition, and charges them to stand upon their guard against them; "When thou art settled in goodly houses of thy own building," v. 12. (for though God gave them houses which they builded not, ch. 6. 10. those would not serve them, they must have larger and finer,) "and when thou art grown rich in cattle, in silver and in gold," (v. 13.) as Abraham, (Gen. 13. 2.) when all thou hast is multiplied."

1. "Then take heed of pride. Beware lest then thy heart be lifted up:" (v. 14.) when the estate rises, the mind is apt to rise with it, in self-conceit, self-complacency, and self-confidence. Let us therefore strive to keep the spirit low in a high condition; humility is both the ease and the ornament of prosperity. Take heed of saying, so much as in thy heart, that proud word, *My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.* v. 17. Note, We must never take the praise of our prosperity to ourselves, nor attribute it to our ingenuity or industry; for bread is not always to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, Eccl. 9. 11. It is spiritual idolatry, thus to sacrifice to our own net, Hab. 1. 16.

2. "Then take heed of forgetting God." This follows upon the lifting up of the heart; for it is through the pride of the countenance that the wicked seeks not after God, Ps. 10. 4. Those that admire themselves, despise God.

(1.) "Forget not thy duty to God," v. 11. We forget God, if we keep not his commandments; we forget his authority over us, and our obligations to him, and expectations from him, if we are not obedient to his laws. When men grow rich, they are tempted to think religion a needless thing; they are happy without it, think it a thing below them, and too hard upon them; their dignity forbids them to stoop, and their liberty forbids them to serve. But we are basely ungrateful, if, the better God is to us, the worse we are to him.

(2.) "Forget not God's former dealings with thee. Thy deliverance out of Egypt, v. 14. The provision he made for thee in the wilderness, that great and terrible wilderness;" they must never forget the impressions which the horror of that wilderness made upon them; see Jer. 2. 6. where it is called the very shadow of death. There God preserved them from being destroyed by the fiery serpents and scorpions, though sometimes he made use of them for their correction: thence he kept them from perishing for want of water, following them with water out of the rock of flint, v. 15. Out of which (says Bishop Patrick) one would rather have expected fire, than water. There he fed them with manna, of which before, (v. 3.) taking care to keep them alive, that he might do them good at their latter end, v. 16. Note, God reserves the best till the last for his Israel. However he may seem to deal hardly with them by the way, he will not fail to do them good at their latter end.

(3.) "Forget not God's hand in thy present prosperity, v. 18. Remember, it is he that giveth thee

wealth; for he *giveth the power to get wealth.*" See here how God's giving and our getting are reconciled, and apply it to spiritual wealth. It is our duty to get wisdom, and above all our gettings to get understanding; and yet it is God's grace that gives wisdom, and when we have got it, we must not say, It was the might of our hand that got it, but must own it was God that gave us power to get it, and therefore to him we must give the praise, and consecrate the use of it. The *blessing of the Lord on the hand of the diligent*, makes rich both for this world and for the other. He *giveth thee power to get wealth*, not so much to gratify thee, and make thee easy, as that he may establish his covenant. All God's gifts are in pursuance of his promises.

III. He repeats the fair warning he had often given them of the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God, v. 19, 20. Observe, 1. How he describes the sin; it is forgetting God, and then worshipping other gods. What wickedness will not they fall into, that keep thoughts of God out of their minds? And when once the affections are displaced from God, they will soon be misplaced upon lying vanities. 2. How he denounces wrath and ruin against them for it; "If you do so, *ye shall surely perish*, and the power and might of your hands, which you are so proud of, cannot help you. Nay, you shall perish, as the nations that are driven out before you. God will make no more account of you, notwithstanding his covenant with you, and your relation to him, than he does of them, if you will not be obedient and faithful to him." They that follow others in sin, will certainly follow them to destruction. If we do as sinners do we must expect to fare as sinners fare.

## CHAP. IX.

The design of Moses in this chapter, is, to convince the people of Israel of their utter unworthiness to receive from God those great favours that were now to be conferred upon them; writing this, as it were in capital letters, at the head of their charter, *Not for your sake, be it known unto you, Ezek. 36. 32.* I. He assures them of victory over their enemies, v. 1.. 3. II. He cautions them not to attribute their successes to their own merit, but to God's justice, which was engaged against their enemies, and his faithfulness, which was engaged to their fathers, v. 4.. 6. III. To make it evident that they had no reason to boast of their own righteousness, he mentions their faults, shows Israel their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. In general, they had been all along a provoking people, v. 7.. 24. In particular, 1. In the matter of the golden calf, the story of which he largely relates, v. 8.. 21. 2. He mentions some other instances of their rebellion, v. 22, 23. And, 3. Returns, at v. 25. to speak of the intercession he had made for them at Horeb, to prevent their being ruined for the golden calf.

1. **H**EAR, O Israel; Thou *art* to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great, and fenced up to heaven; 2. A people great and tall, the children of the Anakins, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak! 3. Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee. 4. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from

before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. 5. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 6. Understand therefore that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou *art* a stiff-necked people.

The call to attention, (v. 1.) *Hear, O Israel*, intimates that this was a new discourse, delivered at some distance of time after the former, probably the next sabbath-day.

I. He represents to them the formidable strength of the enemies which they were now to encounter, v. 1. The nations they were to dispossess were mightier than themselves, not a rude and undisciplined rout, like the natives of America, that were easily made a prey of. But should they besiege them, they would find their cities well fortified according as the art of fortification then was: should they engage them in the field, they would find the people great and tall, of whom common fame had reported, that there was no standing before them, v. 2. This representation is much the same with that which the evil spies had made, (Numb. 13. 28, 33.) but made with a very different intention: that was designed to drive them from God, and to discourage their hope in him; this to drive them to God, and engage their hope in him; since no power less than that which is almighty, could secure and succeed them.

II. He assures them of victory, by the presence of God with them, notwithstanding the strength of the enemy, v. 3. "Understand therefore what thou must trust to for success, and which way thou must look; it is the Lord thy God that goes before thee, not only as thy Captain, or Commander in chief, to give direction, but as a consuming Fire, to do execution among them. Observe, he shall destroy them, and then thou shalt drive them out. Thou canst not drive them out, unless he destroy them, and bring them down. But he will not destroy them, and bring them down, unless thou set thyself in good earnest to drive them out." We must do our endeavour in dependence upon God's grace, and we shall have that grace, if we do our endeavour.

III. He cautions them not to entertain the least thought of their own righteousness, as if that had procured them this favour at God's hand. "Say not, For my righteousness, either with regard to my good character, or in recompense for any good service; *the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land*; (v. 4.) never think it is for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thy heart, that it is for and in consideration either of thy good conversation, or of thy good disposition," v. 5. And again, (v. 6.) it is insisted on, because it is hard to bring people from a conceit of their own merit, and yet very necessary that it be done, "Understand, know it, and believe it, and consider it, that *the Lord thy God giveth thee not this land for thy righteousness*. Hadst thou been to come to it upon that condition, thou hadst been for ever shut out of it, *for thou art a stiff-necked people*." Note, Our gaining possession of the heavenly Canaan, as it must be attributed

God's power, and not to our own might, so it must be ascribed to God's grace, and not to our own merit: in Christ we have both *righteousness and strength*; in him therefore we must glory, and not in ourselves, or any sufficiency of our own.

IV. He intimates to them the true reasons why God would take this good land out of the hands of the Canaanites, and settle it upon Israel, and they are borrowed from his own honour, not from Israel's deserts. 1. He will be honoured in the destruction of Idolaters; they are justly looked upon as haters of him, and therefore he will visit their iniquity upon them. It is for the *wickedness of these nations* that God drives them out, (v. 4.) and again, v. 5. All those whom God rejects, are rejected for their own wickedness: but none of those whom he accepts, are accepted for their own righteousness. 2. He will be honoured in the performance of his promise to those that are in covenant with him: God sware to the patriarchs who loved him, and left all to follow him, that he would give this land to their seed; and therefore he would keep that *promised mercy* for thousands of them that loved him and kept his commandments; he would not suffer his promise to fail. It was for their fathers' sakes that they were beloved, Rom. 11. 28. Thus boasting is for ever excluded. See Eph. 1. 9, 11.

7. Remember, *and* forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD. 8. Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you, to have destroyed you. 9. When I was gone up into the mount, to receive the tables of stone, *even* the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights; I neither did eat bread nor drink water: 10. And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone, written with the finger of God: and on them *was written* according to all the words which the LORD spake with you in the mount, out of the midst of fire, in the day of the assembly. 11. And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, *that* the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, *even* the tables of the covenant. 12. And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*: they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. 13. Furthermore, the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: 14. Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. 15. So I turned, and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the

covenant *were* in my two hands. 16. And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, *and* had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you. 17. And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes. 18. And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger: 19. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also. 20. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. 21. And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, *and* ground it very small, *even* until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount. 22. And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath. 23. Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice. 24. You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you. 25. Thus I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights, as I fell down *at the first*; because the LORD had said he would destroy you. 26. I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin; 28. Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. 29. Yet they *are* thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power, and by thy stretched-out arm.

That they might have no pretence to think that God brought them to Canaan *for their righteousness*, he here shows them what a miracle of mercy it was, that they had not long ere this been destroyed in the wilderness; "*Remember, and forget not,*

*how thou provokedst the Lord thy God; (v. 7.)* so far from purchasing his favour, that thou hast many a time laid thyself open to his displeasure." Their father's provocations are here charged upon them; for if God had dealt with their fathers according to their deserts, this generation had never been, much less had they entered Canaan. We are apt to forget our provocations, especially when the smart of the rod is over, and have need to be often put in mind of them, that we may never entertain any conceit of our own righteousness. St. Paul argues from the guilt which all mankind is under, to prove that we cannot be *justified before God* by our own works, Rom. 3. 19, 20. If our works condemn us, they will not justify us.

1. They had been a provoking people ever since they came out of Egypt, *v. 7. Forty years long*, from first to last, were God and Moses grieved with them. It is a very sad character Moses now at parting leaves of them, (*v. 24.*) *You have been rebellious since the day I knew you.* No sooner were they formed into a people, than there was a faction formed among them, which upon all occasions made head against God and his government. Though the Mosaic history records little more than the occurrences of the first and last year of the forty, yet it seems by this general account, that the rest of the years were not much better, but one continued provocation.

2. Even in Horeb they made a calf and worshipped it, *v. 8, &c.* That was a sin so heinous, and by several aggravations made so exceeding sinful, that they deserved upon all occasions to be upbraided with it. It was done in the very place where the law was given, by which they were expressly forbidden to worship God by images; and while the mountain was yet burning before their eyes, and Moses was gone up to fetch them the law in writing, *They turned aside quickly, v. 16.*

3. God was very angry with them for their sin. Let them not think that God overlooked what they did amiss, and gave them Canaan for what was good among them. No, God had determined to destroy them, (*v. 8.*) could easily have done it, and had been no loser by it; he even desired Moses to let him alone that he might do it, *v. 13, 14.* By this it appeared how heinous their sin was, for God is never angry with any above what there is cause for, as men often are. Moses himself, though a friend and favourite, trembled at the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, against their ungodliness and unrighteousness, (*v. 19.*) *I was afraid of the anger of the Lord;* afraid perhaps not for them only, but for himself, Ps. 119, 120.

4. They had by their sin broken covenant with God, and forfeited all privileges of the covenant, which Moses signified to them by *breaking the tables, v. 17.* A bill of divorce was given them, and from thenceforward they might justly have been abandoned for ever; so that their mouth was certainly stopped from pleading any righteousness of their own. God had, in effect, disowned them, when he said to Moses, (*v. 2.*) "They are thy people, they are none of mine, nor shall they be dealt with as mine."

5. Aaron himself fell under God's displeasure for it, though he was the saint of the Lord, and was only brought by surprise or terror, to be confederate with them in the sin; (*v. 20.*) *The Lord was very angry with Aaron.* No man's place or character can shelter him from the wrath of God, if he have fellowship with the *unfruitful works of darkness.* Aaron that should have made atonement for them, if the iniquity could have been purged away by sacrifice and offering, did himself fall under the wrath of God: so little did they consider what they did, when they drew him in.

6. It was with great difficulty and very long attendance, that Moses himself prevailed to turn away the wrath of God, and prevent their utter ruin. He fasted and prayed full forty days and forty nights, before he could obtain their pardon, *v. 18.* And some think, twice forty days, *v. 25.* Because it is said, "as I fell down before," whereas his errand in the first forty, was not of that nature. Others think, it was but one forty, though twice mentioned, and again, *ch. 10. 10.* But that was enough to make them sensible how great God's displeasure was against them, and what a narrow escape they had for their lives. And in this appears the greatness of God's anger against all mankind, that no less a person than his Son, and no less a price than his own blood, would serve to turn it away. Moses here tells them the substance of his intercession for them. He was obliged to own their stubbornness, and their wickedness and their sin, *v. 27.* Their character was bad indeed, when he that appeared an advocate for them, could not give them a good word; and had nothing else to say in their behalf, but that God had done great things for them, which really did but aggravate their crime, (*v. 26.*) that they were the posterity of good ancestors, (*v. 27.*) which might also have been turned upon him, as making the matter worse and not better: and that the Egyptians would reproach God, if he should destroy them, as unable to perfect what he wrought for them, *v. 28.* A plea which might easily enough have been answered: no matter what the Egyptians say, while the heavens declare God's righteousness. So that the saving of them from ruin at that time, was owing purely to the mercy of God, and the impotency of Moses, and not to any merit of their's, that could be offered so much as in mitigation of their offence.

7. To affect them the more with the destruction they were then at the brink of, he describes the destruction of the calf they had made, very particularly, *v. 21.* He calls it their *sin*: perhaps, not only because it had been the matter of their sin, but because the destroying of it was intended for a testimony against their sin; and an indication to them, what the sinners themselves did deserve. They that made it were like unto it, and had no wrong done them, if they had been thus stamped to dust, and consumed, and scattered, and no remains of them left. It was infinite mercy that accepted the destruction of the idol, instead of the destruction of the idolaters.

8. Even after this fair escape that they had, in many other instances they provoked the Lord again and again. He needed only to name the place, for they carried the memorials either of the sin or of the punishment in their names, (*v. 22.*) at *Taberah, burning*, where God set fire to them for their murmuring; at *Massah, the temptation*, where they challenged almighty power to help them: and at *Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of lusts*, where the dainties they coveted were their poison. And after these, their unbelief and distrust at Kadesh-barnea, which he had already told them of, (*ch. 1.*) and here mentions again, (*v. 24.*) had certainly completed their ruin, if they had been dealt with according to their own merits.

Now let them lay all this together, and it will appear, that whatever favour God should hereafter show them, in subduing their enemies, and putting them in possession of the land of Canaan, it was not for their righteousness. It is good for us often to remember against ourselves, with sorrow and shame, our former sins, and to review the records conscience keeps of them, that we may see how much we are indebted to free grace, and may humbly own that we never merited at God's hand any thing but wrath and the curse.

## CHAP. X.

Moses having, in the foregoing chapter, reminded them of *their own sin*, as a reason why they should not depend upon *their own righteousness*, in this chapter sets before them God's great mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations, as a reason why they should be more obedient for the future. I. He mentions divers tokens of God's favour and reconciliation to them, never to be forgotten. 1. The renewing of the tables of the covenant, v. 1. . . 5. 2. Giving orders for their progress towards Canaan, v. 6, 7. 3. Choosing the tribe of Levi for his own, (v. 8, 9.) and continuing the priesthood after the death of Aaron, v. 6. 4. Owning and accepting the intercession of Moses for them, v. 10, 11. II. From hence he infers what obligations they lay under to fear, and love, and serve God, which he presses upon them with many motives, v. 12. . . 22.

1. **A**T that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. 2. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. 3. And I made an ark of shittim-wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand. 4. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. 5. And I turned myself, and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me. 6. And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his stead. 7. From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters. 8. At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day. 9. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren: the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him. 10. And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also, and the LORD would not destroy thee. 11. And the LORD said unto me, Arise, take *thy* journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give unto them.

There were four things in and by which God showed himself reconciled to Israel, and made them truly great and happy; and in which God's goodness took occasion from their badness to make himself the more illustrious.

I. He gave them his law; gave it them in wri-

ting, as a standing pledge of his favour. Though the tables that were first written, were broken, because they had broken the commandments, and God might justly break the covenant; yet when his anger was turned away, the tables were renewed, v. 1, 2. Note, God's putting his law in our hearts, and writing it in our inward parts, is the surest evidence of our reconciliation to God, and the best earnest of our happiness in him. Moses is bid to hew the tables; for the law prepares the heart by conviction and humiliation for the grace of God, but it is only that grace that then writes the law in it. Moses made an *ark of shittim-wood*, (v. 3.) a plain chest, the same, I suppose, in which the tables were afterward preserved: but Bezaleel is said to make it, (Exod. 37. 1.) because he afterward finished it up, and over-laid it with gold. Or, Moses is said to make it, because when he went up the second time into the mount, he ordered it to be made by Bezaleel, against he came down. And it is observable, that for this reason the ark was the first thing that God gave orders about, Exod. 25. 10. And this left an earnest to the congregation, that the tables should not miscarry this second time, as they had done the first. God will send his law and gospel to those whose hearts are prepared as arks to receive them. Christ is the Ark in which now our salvation is kept safe, that it may not be lost, as it was in the first Adam, when he had it in his own hand.

Observe, 1. What it was that God wrote on the two tables; the ten commandments, (v. 4.) or *ten words*; intimating in how little a compass they were contained: they were not ten *volumes*, but ten *words*: it was the same with the first writing, and both the same that he spoke in the mount. The second edition needed no correction or amendment: nor did what he wrote, differ from what he spoke: the written word is as truly the word of God, as that which he spake to his servants the prophets. 2. What care was taken of it. These two tables, thus engraven, were faithfully laid up in the ark. *And there they be*, said Moses, pointing, it is probable, toward the sanctuary, v. 5. That good thing which was committed to him, he transmitted to them, and left it pure and entire in their hands, now let them, look to it at their peril. Thus we may say to the rising generation, "God has intrusted us with Bibles, sabbaths, sacraments, &c. as tokens of his presence and favour, and there they be; we lodge them with you," 2 Tim. 1. 13, 14.

II. He led them forward toward Canaan, though they in their hearts turned back toward Egypt, and he might justly have chosen their delusions, v. 6, 7. He brought them to a land of *rivers of water*, out of a dry and barren wilderness: when that failed, then by miracles; and yet after this, when they were brought into a little distress, we find them distrusting God and murmuring, Numb. 20. 3, 4.

III. He appointed a standing ministry among them, to deal for them in holy things. At that time, when Moses went up a second time to the mount, or soon after, he had orders to separate the tribe of Levi to God, and to his immediate service, they having distinguished themselves by their zeal against the worshippers of the golden calf, v. 8, 9. The Kohathites carried the ark; they and other Levites stood *before the Lord*, to minister to him in all the offices of the tabernacle; and the priests, who were of that tribe, were to bless the people. This was a standing ordinance, which had now continued almost forty years, even unto this day; and provision was made for the perpetuating of it, by the settled maintenance of that tribe, which was such as gave them great encouragement in their work, and no diversion from it. *The Lord is his inheritance*. Note, A settled ministry is a great



blessing to a people, and a special token of God's favour. And since the particular priests could not continue by reason of death, God showed his care of the people in securing a succession, which Moses takes notice of here, *v. 6.* When *Aaron died*, the priesthood did not die with him, but *Eleazar his son ministered in his stead*, and took care of the ark, in which the tables of stone, those precious stones, were deposited, that they should suffer no damage; there they be, and he has the custody of them. Under the law, a succession in the ministry was kept up, by an entail of the office on a certain tribe and family. But now, under the gospel, when the effusion of the Spirit is more plentiful and powerful, the succession is kept up by the Spirit's operation on men's hearts, qualifying men for, and inclining men to, that work, some in every age, that the name of Israel may not be blotted out.

IV. He accepted Moses as an advocate or intercessor for them, and therefore constituted him their prince and leader, *v. 10, 11, The Lord hearkened to me, and said, Arise, go before the people.* It was a mercy to them, that they had such a friend, so faithful both to him that appointed him, and to them for whom he was appointed. It was fit that he who had saved them from ruin, by his intercession with heaven, should have the conduct and command of them. And herein he was a type of Christ, who, as he *ever lives making intercession* for us, so he has *all power both in heaven and in earth.*

12. And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, 13. To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? 14. Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein is. 15. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day. 16. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. 17. For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: 18. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. 19. Love ye, therefore, the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. 21. He is thy praise, and he *is* thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen. 22. Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three-score and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Here is a most pathetic exhortation to obedience, inferred from the premises, and urged with very powerful arguments, and a great deal of persuasive

rhetoric. He brings it in like an orator, with an appeal to his auditors, *And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? v. 12.* Ask what he requires; as David, (Ps. 116. 12.) *What shall I render?* When we have received mercy from God, it becomes us to inquire what returns we shall make to him. Consider what he requires, and you will find it is nothing but what is highly just and reasonable in itself, and of unspeakable benefit and advantage to you. Let us see here what he does require, and what abundant reason there is why we should do what he requires.

I. We are here most plainly directed in our duty, both to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves.

1. We are here taught our duty to God, both in the dispositions and affections of our souls, and in the actions of our lives; our principles, and our practices. (1.) We must *fear the Lord our God, v. 12,* and again, *v. 20.* We must adore his majesty, acknowledge his authority, stand in awe of his power, and dread his wrath. This is gospel-duty, Rev. 14. 6, 7. (2.) We must love him, be well-pleased that he is, desire that he may be ours, and delight in the contemplation of him, and in communion with him. Fear him as a great God, and our Lord, love him as a good God, and our Father and Benefactor. (3.) We must walk in his ways, that is, the ways which he has appointed us to walk in. The whole course of our conversation must be conformable to his holy will. (4.) We must *serve him; (v. 20.)* serve him *with all our heart and souls (v. 12.)* devote ourselves to his honour, put ourselves under his government, and lay out ourselves to advance all the interests of his kingdom among men. And we must be hearty and zealous in his service, engage and employ our inward man in his work, and what we do for him, we must do cheerfully and with a good will. (5.) We must *keep his commandments and his statutes, v. 13.* Having given up ourselves to his service, we must make his revealed will our rule in every thing; perform all he prescribes; forbear all he forbids; firmly believing that all the statutes he commands us, are for our good. Beside the reward of obedience, which will be our unspeakable gain, there is true honour and pleasure in obedience. It is really for our present good, to be meek and humble, chaste and sober, just and charitable, patient and contented; these make us easy, and safe, and pleasant, and truly great. (6.) We must give honour to God, in *swearing by his name; (v. 20.)* so give him the honour of his omniscience, his sovereignty, his justice, as well as of his necessary existence. *Swear by his name*, and not by the name of any creature, or false god, whenever an oath for confirmation is called for. (7.) *To him we must cleave, v. 20.* Having chosen him for our God, we must faithfully and constantly abide with him, and never forsake him. *Cleave to him* as one we love and delight in, trust and confide in, and from whom we have great expectations.

2. We are here taught our duty to our neighbour, (v. 19.) *Love ye the stranger.* And if the stranger, much more our brethren, as ourselves. If the Israelites that were such a peculiar people, so particularly distinguished from all people, must be kind to strangers, much more must we, that are not enclosed in such a pale; we must have a tender concern for all that share with us in the human nature, and as *we have opportunity*, that is, according to their necessities and our abilities, we must *do good unto all men.* Two arguments are here urged to enforce this duty. (1.) God's common providence, which extends itself to all nations of men, they being all *made of one blood.* God *loveth the stranger, (v. 18.)* that is, he gives to all life, and breath, and all things, even to those that are Gen



tiles, and *strangers to the commonwealth of Israel* and to Israel's God. He knows those perfectly whom we know nothing of. He gives *food and raiment* even to those to whom he has not showed his word and statutes. God's common gifts to mankind oblige us to honour all men. Or, it denotes the particular care which Providence takes of strangers in distress, which we ought to praise him for, (Ps. 146. 9. *The Lord preserveth the strangers,*) and to imitate him, to serve him, and concur with him, therein, being forward to make ourselves instruments in his hand of kindness to strangers. (2.) The afflicted condition which the Israelites themselves had been in, when they were strangers in Egypt. They that have themselves been in distress, and have found mercy with God, should sympathize most feelingly with those that are in the like distress, and be ready to show kindness to them. The people of the Jews, notwithstanding these repeated commands given them to be kind to strangers, conceived a rooted antipathy to the Gentiles, whom they looked upon with the utmost disdain, which made them envy them the grace of God, and the gospel of Christ, and that brought a final ruin upon themselves.

3. We are here taught our duty to ourselves, (v. 16.) *Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts*, that is, "Cast away from you all corrupt affections and inclinations which hinder you from fearing and loving God. *Mortify the flesh* with the lusts of it. Away with all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, which obstruct the free course of the word of God to your hearts. Rest not in the circumcision of the body, which was only the sign, but be circumcised in heart, which is the thing signified." See Rom. 2. 29. The command of Christ goes further than this, and obliges us not only to *cut off the foreskin of the heart*, which may easily be spared, but to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, that is an offence to us: the more spiritual the dispensation is, the more spiritual we are obliged to be, and to go the closer in mortifying sin. And *be no more stiff-necked*, as they had been hitherto, ch. 9. 24. "Be not any longer obstinate against divine commands and corrections, but ready to comply with the will of God in both." The circumcision of the heart makes it ready to yield to God, and draw in his yoke.

II. We are here most pathetically persuaded to our duty. Let but reason rule us, and religion will.

1. Consider the greatness and glory of God, and therefore fear him, and from that principle serve and obey him. What is it that is thought to make a man great, but great honour, power, and possessions? Think then how great the Lord our God is, and greatly to be feared. (1.) He has great honour, a name above every name, v. 17. He is *God of gods*, and *Lord of Lords*. Angels are called *gods*, so are magistrates, and the Gentiles had *gods many*, and *lords many*, the creatures of their own fancy, but God is infinitely above all these nominal deities. What an absurdity would it be for them to worship other gods, when the God to whom they had sworn allegiance, was the *God of Gods*! (2.) He has great power. He is a *mighty God and terrible*, (v. 17.) *which regardeth not persons*. He has the power of a conqueror, and so he is terrible to those that resist him and rebel against him. He has the power of a judge, and so he is just to all those that appeal to him or appear before him. And it is as much the greatness and honour of a judge to be impartial in his justice, without respect to persons or bribes, as it is to a general to be terrible to the enemy. Our God is both. (3.) He has great possessions. Heaven and earth are his, (v. 14.) and all the hosts and stars of both. Therefore

he is able to bear us out in his service, and to make up the losses we sustain in discharging our duty to him. And yet therefore he has no need of us, or any thing we have, or can do; we are undone without him; but he is happy without us; which makes the condescensions of his grace, in accepting us and our services, truly admirable. Heaven and earth are his possession, and yet *the Lord's portion is his people*.

2. Consider the goodness and grace of God, and therefore love him, and from that principle serve and obey him. His goodness is his glory, as much as his greatness.

(1.) He is good to all. Whomsoever he finds miserable, to them he will be found merciful, v. 18. He *executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow*. It is his honour to help the helpless, and to succour those that most need relief, and that men are apt to do injury to, or at least to put a slight upon. See Ps. 68. 4, 5.—146. 7, 9.

(2.) But *truly God is good to Israel*, in a special manner, and therefore they are under special obligations to him. "*He is thy Praise, and he is thy God*, v. 21. Therefore love him and serve him, because of the relation wherein he stands to thee. He is thy God, a God in covenant with thee, and as such he is thy Praise," that is, [1.] "He puts honour upon thee; he is the God in whom, all the day long, thou mayest boast that thou knowest him, and art known of him. If he be thy God, he is thy Glory." [2.] "He expects honour from thee. *He is thy Praise*," that is, "he is the God whom thou art bound to praise; if he has not praise from thee, whence may he expect it!" He *inhabits the praises of Israel*.

Consider, *First*, The gracious choice he made of Israel, v. 15. "He had a delight in thy fathers, and therefore chose their seed." Not that there was any thing in them to merit his favour, or to recommend them to it, but so it seemed good in his eyes. He would be kind to them, though he had no need of them. *Secondly*, The great things he had done for Israel, v. 21, 22. He reminds them not only of what they had heard with their ears, and which their fathers had told them of, but of what they had seen with their eyes, and which they must tell their children of; particularly that within a few generations seventy souls (for there were no more when Jacob went down into Egypt) increased to a great nation, *as the stars of heaven for multitude*. And the more they were in number, the more praise and service God expected from them; yet it proved, as in the old world, that when they began to multiply, they corrupted themselves.

## CHAP. XI.

With this chapter Moses concludes his preface to the repetition of the statutes and judgments which they must observe to do. He repeats the general charge, (v. 1.) and having in the close of the foregoing chapter begun to mention the great things God had done among them, in this I. He specifies several of the great works God had done before their eyes, v. 2.. 7. II. He sets before them, for the future, life and death, the blessing and the curse, according as they did, or did not, keep God's commandments. That they should certainly prosper if they were obedient, should be blessed with plenty of all good things, (v. 8.. 15.) and with victory over their enemies, and the enlargement of their coast thereby, v. 22.. 25. But their disobedience would undoubtedly be their ruin, v. 16, 17. III. He directs them what means to use, that they might keep in mind the law of God, v. 18.. 21. And, IV. Concludes all with solemnly charging them to choose which they would have, the blessing or the curse, v. 26.. 32.

1. **T**HEREFORE thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. 2. And know you

this day : for *I speak* not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, 3. And his miracles, and his acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; 4. And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and *how* the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day; 5. And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place. 6. And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their possession, in the midst of all Israel: 7. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did.

Because *God has made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude*, so the chapter before concludes; *therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, so this begins. Those whom God has built up into families, whose beginning was small, but whose latter end greatly increases, should use that as an argument with themselves, why they should serve God. Thou shalt *keep his charge*, that is, the oracles of his word, and ordinances of his worship, with which they were intrusted, and for which they were accountable. It is a phrase often used concerning the office of the priests and Levites, for all Israel was a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Observe the connexion of these two: *Thou shalt love the Lord*, and *keep his charge*: since love will work in obedience, and that only is acceptable obedience which flows from a principle of love, 1 John 5. 3.

He goes on to mention divers of the great and terrible works of God which their *eyes had seen*, v. 7. This part of his discourse he addresses to the *seniors* among them, the elders in age; and, probably, the elders in office were so, and were now his immediate auditors: there were some among them, that could remember their deliverance out of Egypt, all above fifty, and to them he speaks this, not to the children, who knew it by hearsay only, v. 2. Note, God's mercies to us when we were young, we should remember and retain the impressions of when we are old; what our eyes have seen, especially in our early days, has affected us, and should be improved by us long after.

They had seen what terrible judgments God had executed upon the enemies of Israel's peace; 1. Upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians that enslaved them. What a fine country was ruined and laid waste by one plague after another, to force Israel's enlargement! v. 3. What a fine army was entirely drowned in the Red-sea, to prevent Israel's being re-enslaved! v. 4. Thus did he give *Egypt for their ransom*, Isa. 45. 3. Rather shall that famous kingdom be destroyed, than that Israel shall not be delivered. 2. Upon Dathan and Abiram that embroiled them. Remember *what he did in the wilderness*, (v. 5.) by how many necessary chastisements, (as they are called, v. 2.) they were kept from ruining themselves. Particularly, when those daring Reubenites defied the authority of Moses,

and headed a dangerous rebellion against God himself, which threatened the ruin of a whole nation, and might have ended in that, if the divine power had not immediately crushed the rebellion, by burying the rebels alive, them, and *all that was in their possession*, v. 6. What was done against them, though misinterpreted by the disaffected party, (Numb. 16. 41.) was really done in mercy to Israel. To be saved from the mischiefs of insurrections at home, is as great a kindness to a people, and therefore lays under as strong obligations, as protection from the invasion of enemies abroad.

8. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land whither ye go to possess it; 9. And that ye may prolong *your* days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10. For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, *is* not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst *it* with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: 11. But the land, whither ye go to possess it, *is* a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; 12. A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God *are* always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. 13. And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul, 14. That I will give *you* the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. 15. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. 16. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; 17. And *then* the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and *lest* ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Still he urges the same subject, as loath to conclude till he had gained his point. *If thou wilt enter into life*, if thou wilt enter into Canaan, a type of that life, and find it a good land indeed to thee, *keep the commandments*, keep all the commandments which I command you this day: *love God*, and *serve him with all your heart*.

I. Because this was the way to get and keep possession of the promised land. 1. It was the way to get possession; (v. 8.) *That ye may be strong* for war, and so *go in and possess it*. So little did they know either of hardship or hazard in the wars of Canaan, that he does not say they should go in and *fight for it*; no, they had nothing in effect to do but go in and *possess it*. He does not go about to

teach them the art of war, how to draw the bow, and use the sword, and keep ranks, that they might be strong, and go in and possess the land; no, but let them *keep God's commandments*, and their religion, while they are true to it, will be their strength, and secure their success. 2. It was the way to keep possession; (v. 9.) *That ye may prolong your days in this land* that your eye is upon. So tends to the shortening of the days of particular persons, and to the shortening of the days of a people's prosperity; but obedience will be a lengthening out of their tranquillity.

II. Because the land of Canaan, into which they were going, had a more sensible dependence upon the blessing of heaven, than the land of Egypt had, v. 16-12. Egypt was a country fruitful enough, but it was all flat, and was watered, not as other countries, with rain; (it is said of Egypt, Zech. 14. 18. that it *has no rain*.) but by the overflowing of the Nile at a certain season of the year; to the improving of which there was necessary a great deal of the art and labour of the husbandman; so that in Egypt a man must bestow as much cost and pains upon a field, as upon a garden of herbs. And this made them the more apt to imagine that the power of their own hands got them this wealth. But the land of Canaan was an uneven country, a land of hills and valleys, which not only gave a more pleasing prospect to the eye, but yielded a greater variety of soils for the several purposes of the husbandman. It was a land that had no great rivers in it, except Jordan, but *drank water of the rain of heaven*. And so, 1. Saved them a great deal of labour. While the Egyptians were ditching and guttering in the fields, up to their knees in mud, to bring water to their land, which otherwise would soon become like the heath in a wilderness, the Israelites could sit in their houses, warm and easy, and leave it to God to water their land with the former and the latter rain, which is called *the river of God*, (Ps. 65. 9.) perhaps in allusion to, and contempt of, the river of Egypt, which that nation was so proud of. Note, The better God has provided, by our outward condition, for our ease and convenience, the more we should abound in his service: the less we have to do for our bodies, the more we should do for God and our souls. 2. So he directed them to look upward to God, who *giveth us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons*, (Acts 14. 17.) and promised to be himself *as the dew unto Israel*, (Hos. 14. 5.) Note, (1.) Mercies bring with them the greatest comfort and sweetness, when we see them coming from heaven, the immediate gifts of Divine Providence. (2.) The closer dependence we have upon God, the more cheerful we should be in our obedience to him. See how Moses here magnifies the land of Canaan, above all other lands, that the *eyes of God were always upon it*, that is, they should be so, to see that nothing was wanting, while they kept close to God and duty; its fruitfulness should be, not so much the happy effect of its soil, as the immediate fruit of the divine blessing; this may be inferred from its present state, for it is said to be at this day, now that God is departed from it, as barren a spot of ground as perhaps any under heaven. Call it not *Naomi*: call it *Marah*.

III. Because God would certainly bless them with an abundance of all good things, if they would love him and serve him, v. 13-15. *I will give you the rain of your land in due season*, so that they should neither want it when the ground called for it, nor have it in excess; but they should have the former rain, which fell at seed-time, and the latter rain, which fell before the harvest, Amos 4. 7. This represented all the seasonable blessings which God would bestow upon them, especially spiritual comforts, which should come *as the latter and for-*

*mer rain*, Hos. 6. 3. And the earth thus watered produced, 1. Fruits for the service of man; *corn, and wine, and oil*, Ps. 104. 13-15. 2. Grass for the cattle, that they also might be serviceable to man; that *he might eat of them and be full*, v. 15. Godliness hath here the *promise of the life that now is*; but the *favour of God shall put gladness into the heart*, more than the *increase of corn, and wine, and oil*, will.

IV. Because their revolt from God to idols would certainly be their ruin; (v. 16, 17.) *Take heed that your hearts be not deceived*. All that forsake God to set their affection upon, or pay their devotion to, any creature, will find themselves wretchedly deceived to their own destruction; and this will aggravate it, that it was purely for want of taking heed. A little care would have prevented their being imposed upon by the great deceiver. To awaken them to take heed, Moses here tells them plainly, that if they should *turn aside to other gods*, 1. They would provoke the wrath of God against them; and *who knows the power of that anger?* 2. Good things would be turned away from them; the heaven would withhold its rain, and then of course the earth would not yield its fruit. 3. Evil things would come upon them, they would perish quickly from off this good land. And the better the land was, the more grievous it would be to perish from it. The goodness of the land would not be their security, when the badness of the inhabitants had made them ripe for ruin.

18. Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. 19. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 20. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates; 21. That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. 22. For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; 23. Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. 24. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea, shall your coast be. 25. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

Here,

I. He repeats the directions he had given for their guidance and assistance in their obedience and for the keeping up of religion among them, (v. 18-20.) which is much to the same purport with what we had before, ch. 6. 6, &c. Let us all be di-

rected by the three rules here given. 1. Let our hearts be filled with the word of God. *Lay up these words in your heart and in your soul.* The heart must be the treasury or store-house in which the word of God must be laid up, to be used upon all occasions. We cannot expect good practices in the conversation, unless there be good thoughts, good affections, and good principles, in the heart. 2. Let our eyes be fixed upon the word of God. "Bind these words for a sign *upon your hand*, which is always in view, (Isa. 49. 16.) *and as frontlets between your eyes*, which you cannot avoid the sight of; let them be as ready and familiar to you, and have your eye as constantly upon them, as if they were *written upon your door-posts* and could not be overlooked either when you go out or when you come in." Thus we must *lay God's judgments before us*, having a constant regard to them, as the guide of our way, as the rule of our work, Ps. 119. 30. 3. Let our tongues be employed about the word of God. Let it be the subject of our familiar discourse, wherever we are; especially with our children, who must be taught the service of God, as the one thing needful, much more needful than either the rules of decency, or the calling they must live by in this world. Great care and pains must be taken to acquaint children betimes, and to affect them, with the word of God and the wondrous things of his law. Nor will any thing contribute more to the prosperity and perpetuity of religion in a nation, than the good education of children: if the seed be holy, it is the substance of a land.

II. He repeats the assurances he had before given them, in God's name, of prosperity and success, if they were obedient: 1. They should have a happy settlement, v. 21. Their days should be multiplied; and when they were fulfilled, the days of their children likewise should be many, as the days of heaven, that is, Canaan should be sure to them and their heirs for ever, as long as the world stands, if they did not by their own sin throw themselves out of it. 2. It should not be in the power of their enemies to give them any disturbance, or make them upon any account uneasy. "If ye will *keep God's commandments*, and be careful to do your duty, (v. 22.) God will not only crown the labours of the husbandman with plenty of the fruits of the earth, but he will own and succeed the more glorious undertakings of the men of war; victory shall attend your arms: which way soever they turn, God will drive out these nations, and put you in possession of their land," v. 23, 24. Their territories should be enlarged to the utmost extent of the promise, Gen. 15. 18. And all their neighbours should stand in awe of them, v. 25. Nothing contributes more to the making of a nation considerable abroad, valuable to its friends, and formidable to its enemies, than religion reigning in it; for who can be against those that have God for them? And he is certainly for those that are sincerely for him, Prov. 14. 34.

26. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: 27. A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day; 28. And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. 29. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou

goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. 30. *Are they not on the other side Jordan*, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh? 31. For ye shall pass over Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein. 32. And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day.

Here Moses concludes his general exhortation to obedience; and his management is very affecting, and such as, one would think, should have engaged them for ever to God, and should have left impressions upon them, never to be worn out.

I. He sums up all his arguments for obedience in two words, *the blessing and the curse*, (v. 26.) that is, the rewards and the punishments, as they stand in the promises and the threatenings, which are the great sanctions of the law, taking hold of hope and fear, those two handles of the soul, by which it is caught, held, and managed. These two, the blessing, and the curse, he set before them, that is, 1. He explained them, that they might know them; he enumerated the particulars contained both in the blessing and in the curse, that they might see the more fully how desirable the blessing was, and how dreadful the curse. 2. He confirmed them, that they might believe them; made it evident to them, by the proofs he produced of his own commission, that the blessing was not a fool's paradise, nor the curse a bugbear, but that both were real declarations of the purpose of God concerning them. 3. He charged them to choose which of these they would have. So fairly does he deal with them, and so far is he from *putting out the eyes of these men*, as he was charged, Numb. 16. 14. They and we are plainly told on what terms we stand with Almighty God. (1.) If we be obedient to his laws, we may be sure of a blessing, v. 27. But, (2.) If we be disobedient, we may be as sure of a curse, v. 28. *Say ye to the righteous*, (for God has said it, and all the world cannot unsay it,) *that it shall be well with them: But woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them.*

II. He appoints a public and solemn proclamation to be made of the blessing and curse which he had set before them, upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, v. 29, 30. We have more particular directions for this solemnity, (ch. 27. 11, &c.) and an account of the performance of it, Josh. 8. 33, &c. It was to be done, and was done, immediately upon their coming into Canaan, that when they first took possession of that land, they might know upon what terms they stood. The place where this was to be done, is particularly described by Moses, though he never saw it, which is one circumstance among many, that evidences his divine instructions. It is said to be near the *plain*, or *oaks*, or *meadows*, of *Moreh*, which was one of the first places that Abraham came to in Canaan; so that in sending them thither to hear the blessing and the curse, God reminded them of the promise he made to Abraham in that very place, Gen. 12. 6, 7. The mention of this appointment here, serves, 1. For the encouragement of their faith in the promise of God, that they should be masters of Canaan quickly. Do it (says Moses) on the other side Jordan, (v. 30.) for you may be confident *you shall pass over Jordan*, v. 31. The institution of this service to be done in Ca-

naam, was an assurance to them that they should be brought into possession of it, and a token, like that which God gave to Moses, (Exod. 3. 12.) *Ye shall serve God upon this mountain.* And, 2. It serves for an engagement upon them to be obedient, that they might escape that curse, and obtain that blessing, which, beside what they had already heard, they must shortly be witnesses to the solemn publication of, (v. 32.) “*Ye shall observe to do the statutes and judgments, that ye may not in that solemnity be witnesses against yourselves.*”

## CHAP. XII.

Moses at this chapter comes to the particular statutes which he had to give in charge to Israel, and he begins with those which relate to the worship of God; and particularly those which explain the second commandment, about which God is in a special manner jealous. 1. They must utterly destroy all relics and remains of idolatry, v. 1. . . 3. 2. They must keep close to the tabernacle, v. 4, 5. The former precept was intended to prevent all false worship; the latter, to preserve the worship God had instituted. By this latter law, 1. They are commanded to bring all their offerings to the altar of God, and all their holy things to the place which he should choose, v. 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 26. . . 28. 2. They are forbidden, in general, to do as they now did in the wilderness, (v. 8. . . 11.) and as the Canaanites had done; (v. 29. . . 32.) and, in particular, to eat the hallowed things at their own houses; (v. 13, 17, 18.) or, to forsake the instituted ministry, v. 19. 3. They are permitted to eat flesh as common food at their own houses, provided they did not eat the blood, v. 15, 16. And again, v. 20. . . 26.

1. **THESE** are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. 2. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: 3. And you shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. 4. Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

From those great original truths, That there is a God, and, That there is but one God, arise those great fundamental laws, That that God is to be worshipped, and he only, and that therefore we are to have no other God before him: this is the first commandment, and the second is a guard upon it, or a hedge about it. To prevent a revolt to false gods, we are forbidden to worship the true God in such a way and manner as the false gods were worshipped in; and are commanded to observe the instituted ordinances of worship, that we may adhere to the proper Object of worship. For this reason, Moses is very large in his exposition of the second commandment. What is contained in this, and the four following chapters, mostly refers to that. *These are statutes and judgments which they must observe to do*, v. 1. 1. In the days of their rest and prosperity, when they should be masters of Canaan. We must not think that our religion is instituted only to be our work in the years of our servitude, our entertainment in the places of our solitude, and our consolation in affliction; no, when we come to possess a good land, still we must keep up the worship of God in Canaan, as well as in a wilderness; when we are grown up, as well as when we are children; when we are full of business, as well as when we have nothing else to do. 2. *All the days*, as long as ye live

*upon the earth.* While we are here in our state of trial, we must continue in our obedience, even to the end, and never leave our duty, nor grow weary of well-doing.

Now, 1. They are here charged to abolish and extirpate all those things that the Canaanites had served their idol-gods with, v. 2, 3. Here is no mention of idol-temples, which countenances the opinion some have, that the tabernacle Moses reared in the wilderness, was the first habitation that ever was made for religious uses; and that from it temples took their rise. But the places that had been used, and were now to be levelled, were enclosures for their worship on *mountains and hills*, (as if the height of the ground would give advantage to the ascent of their devotions,) and under green trees, either because pleasant, or because awful: whatever makes the mind easy and reverent, contracts and composes it, was thought to befriend devotion. The solemn shade and silence of a grove are still admired by those that are disposed to contemplation. But the advantages which these retirements gave to the Gentiles in the worship of their idols, was, that they concealed those works of darkness which could not bear the light; and therefore they must all be destroyed, with the altars, pillars, and images, that had been used by the natives in the worship of their gods, so as that the very names of them might be buried in oblivion, and not only not be remembered with respect, but not remembered at all. They must thus consult, (1.) The reputation of their land; let it never be said of this holy land, that it had been thus polluted, but let all these dunghills be carried away, as things they were ashamed of. (2.) The safety of their religion; let none be left remaining, lest profane unthinking people, especially in degenerate ages, should make use of them in the service of the God of Israel. Let these pest-houses be demolished, as things they were afraid of. He begins the statutes that relate to divine worship with this, because there must first be an abhorrence of that which is evil, before there can be a steady adherence to that which is good, Rom. 12. 9. The kingdom of God must be set up, both in persons and places, upon the ruins of the Devil's kingdom; for they cannot stand together, nor can there be any communion between Christ and Belial.

2. They are charged not to translate the rites and usages of idolaters into the worship of God; no, not under colour of beautifying and improving it; (v. 4.) *Ye shall not do so to the LORD your God*, that is, “You must not think to do honour to him, by offering sacrifices on mountains and hills, erecting pillars, planting groves, and setting up images; no, you must not indulge a luxurious fancy in your worship, nor think that whatever pleases that, will please God: *he is above all gods*, and will not be worshipped as other gods are.”

5. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: 6. And thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave-offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your free-will offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: 7. And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, you and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. 8. Ye shall not do after all

*the things* that we do here this day, every man whatsoever *is* right in his own eyes.

9. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. 10. But *when* ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and *when* he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; 11. Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: 12. And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and the Levite that *is* within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you. 13. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest: 14. But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. 15. Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. 16. Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water. 17. Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy free-will-offerings, or heave-offering of thine hand: 18. But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God, in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto. 19. Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth. 20. When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, (because thy soul longeth to eat flesh,) thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 21. If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded

thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 22. Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them; the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike. 23. Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood *is* the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. 24. Thou shalt not eat it: thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. 25. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do *that which is* right in the sight of the LORD. 26. Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose: 27. And thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh. 28. Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest *that which is* good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God. 29. When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; 30. Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. 31. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. 32. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

There is not any one particular precept (as I remember) in all the law of Moses, so largely pressed and inculcated as this, by which they are all tied to bring their sacrifices to that one altar which was set up in the court of the tabernacle, and there to perform all the rituals of their religion; for as to moral services, then, no doubt, as now, men might pray every where, as they did in their synagogues. The command to do this, and the prohibition of the contrary, are here repeated again and again, as we teach children; and yet we are sure that there is in scripture no vain repetition: but all this stress is laid upon it, 1. Because of the strange proneness there was in the hearts of the people to idolatry and superstition, and the danger of their being seduced by the many temptations which they would be surrounded with. 2. Because of the great use which the observance of this appointment would be of to them, both to prevent the introducing of corrupt customs into their worship, and to preserve among them unity and brotherly love; that meeting all in



one place, they might continue both of one way, and of one heart. 3. Because of the significance of this appointment. They must keep to one place, in token of their belief of those two great truths, which we find together, (1 Tim. 2. 5.) That *there is one God, and our Mediator between God and man*. It not only served to keep up the notion of the unity of the Godhead, but was an intimation to them (though they could not steadfastly discern it) of the one only way of approach to God, and communion with him, in and by the Messiah.

Let us now reduce this long charge to its proper heads.

I. It is here promised, that when they were settled in Canaan, when they had *rest from their enemies, and dwelt in safety*, God would choose a certain place, which he would appoint to be the centre of their unity, to which they should bring all their offerings, v. 10, 11. Observe, 1. If they must be tied to one place, they should not be left in doubt concerning it, but should certainly know what place it was. Had Christ intended, under the gospel, to make any one place such a seat of power, as Rome pretends to be, we should not have been left so destitute of instruction as we are, concerning the appointed place. 2. God does not leave it to them to choose the place, lest the tribes should have quarrelled about it, each striving for their secular advantage, to have it among them; but he reserves the choice to himself, as he does the designation of the Redeemer, and the institution of holy ordinances. 3. He does not appoint the place now, as he had appointed mounts Gerizim and Ebal, for the pronouncing of the blessings and curses, (ch. 11. 29.) but reserves the doing of it till hereafter, that thereby they might be made to expect further directions from heaven, and a divine conduct, after Moses should be removed.

The place which God would choose, is said to be the place where he would put his name, that is, which he would have to be called his, where his honour should dwell, where he would manifest himself to his people, and make himself known, as men do by their names, and where he would receive addresses by which his name is both praised and called upon. It was to be his habitation, where, as King of Israel, he would keep court, and be found by all those who reverently sought him. The ark was the token of God's presence, and where that was put, there God put his name, and that was his habitation; it contained the tables of the law; for none must expect to receive favours from God's hand, but those that are willing to *receive the law from his mouth*. The place which God first chose for the ark to reside in, was Shiloh: and after that place had sinned away its honours, we find the ark at Kirjath-jearim, and other places; but at length, in David's time, it was fixed at Jerusalem, and God said concerning Solomon's temple, more expressly than ever he had said concerning any other place, *This I have chosen for a house of sacrifice*, 2 Chron. 7. 12. Compare ch. 6. 5. Now, under the gospel, we have no temple that sanctifies the gold, no altar that sanctifies the gift, but Christ only; and as to the places of worship, the prophets foretold that *in every place the spiritual incense should be offered*, Mal. 1. 11. And our Saviour has declared that those are accepted as true worshippers, who worship God in sincerity and truth, without regard either to this mountain or Jerusalem, John 4. 21.

II. They are commanded to bring all their burnt-offerings and sacrifices to this place that God would choose, v. 6. And again, v. 11, *Thither shall ye bring all that I command you*. And v. 14, *There thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings*. And v. 27, *The flesh and the blood must be offered upon the altar of the Lord thy God*. And of their peace-

offerings, here called their *sacrifices*, though they were to *eat the flesh*, yet *the blood* was to be *poured out upon the altar*. By this they were taught that sacrifices and offerings God did not desire, nor accept, for their own sake, nor for any intrinsic worth in them, as natural expressions of homage and adoration: but that they received their virtue purely from the altar on which they were offered, as it typified Christ; whereas prayers and praises, as much more necessary and valuable, were to be offered every day by the people of God wherever they were. A devout Israelite might honour God, and keep up communion with him, and obtain mercy from him, though he had not an opportunity, perhaps, for many months together, of bringing a sacrifice to his altar. But this signified the obligation we Christians are under, to offer up all our spiritual sacrifices to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, hoping for acceptance only upon the score of his mediation, 1 Pet. 2. 5.

III. They are commanded to feast upon their hallowed things, before the Lord with holy joy. They must not only bring to the altar the sacrifices which were to be offered to God, but they must bring to the place of the altar all those things which they were appointed by the law to eat and drink, to the honour of God, in token of their communion with him, v. 6. Their *tithes, heave-offerings of their hand*, that is, their first-fruits, their vows, and *free-will-offerings*, and firstlings, all these things which were to be religiously made use of, either by themselves, or by the priests and Levites, must be brought to the place which God would choose; as all the revenues of the crown, from all parts of the kingdom, are brought into the exchequer. And v. 7, *There shall ye eat before the Lord, and rejoice in all that ye put your hands unto*. And again, (v. 12.) *Ye shall rejoice before the Lord, ye, and your sons, and your daughters*. Observe here, 1. That what we do in the service of God and to his glory, redounds to our benefit, if it be not our own fault. They that sacrifice to God, are welcome to eat before him, and to feast upon their sacrifices; he *sups with us*, and *we with him*, Rev. 3. 20. If we glorify God, we edify ourselves, and cultivate our own minds, through the grace of God, by the increase of our knowledge and faith, the enlivening of devout affections, and the confirming of gracious habits and resolutions: thus is the soul nourished. 2. That work for God should be done with holy joy and cheerfulness. *Ye shall eat and rejoice*, v. 7. And again, v. 12. and v. 18. (1.) Now while they were before the Lord, they must rejoice, v. 12. It is the will of God that we should serve him with gladness; none displeased him more than they that *covered his altar with tears*, Mal. 2. 13. See what a good Master we serve, that has made it our duty to sing at our work. Even the children and servants must rejoice with them before God, that the services of religion might be a pleasure to them, and not a task or drudgery. (2.) They must *carry away with them* the grateful relish of that delight which they found in communion with God; they must rejoice in all that they *put their hands unto*, v. 7. Some of the comfort which they had had in the business of religion, they must take with them into their common employments; and being thus strengthened in soul, whatever they did, they must do it heartily and cheerfully. And this holy pious joy in God and his goodness, with which we are to rejoice evermore, would be the best preservative against the sin and snare of *vain and carnal mirth*, and a relief against the *sorrows of the world*.

IV. They are commanded to be kind to the Levites. Did they feast with joy? The Levites must feast with them, and rejoice with them, v. 12. And again, v. 18. And a general caution, (v. 19.) *Take*

heed that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest. There were Levites that attended the altar as assistants to the priests, and these must not be forsaken, that is, the service they performed, must be constantly adhered to; no other altar must be set up, than that which God appointed; for that would be to forsake the Levites. But this here seems to be spoken of the Levites that were dispersed in the country to instruct the people in the law of God, and to assist them in their devotions; for it is the *Levite within their gates*, that they are here commanded to make much of. It is a great mercy to have Levites near us, within our gates, that we may ask the law at their mouth, and at our feasts to be a check upon us, to restrain excesses. And it is the duty of people to be kind to their ministers that give them good instructions, and set them good examples. As long as we live, we shall need their assistance, till we come to that world where ordinances will be superseded; and therefore *as long as we live*, we must not forsake the Levites. The reason given, (v. 12.) is because *the Levite has no part nor inheritance with you*; so that he cannot grow rich by husbandry or trade; let him therefore share with you in the comfort of your riches. They must give the Levites their tithes and offerings, settled on them by the law, because they have no other maintenance.

V. They are allowed to eat common flesh, but not the flesh of their offerings, in their own houses wherever they dwell. What was any way devoted to God, they must not eat at home, v. 13, 17. But what was not so devoted, they might kill, and eat of, at their pleasure, v. 15. And their permission is again repeated, v. 20-22. It should seem that while they were in the wilderness, they did not eat the flesh of any of those kind of beasts that were used in sacrifice, but what was killed at the door of the tabernacle, and part of it presented to God as a peace-offering, Lev. 17. 3, 4. But when they came to Canaan, where they must live at a great distance from the tabernacle, they might kill what they pleased for their own use, of their flocks and herds, without bringing part to the altar. This allowance is very express, and repeated, lest Satan should take occasion from the law which forbade the eating of their sacrifices at their own houses, to suggest to them, as he did to our first parents, hard thoughts of God, as if he grudged them the enjoyment of what he had given them; *Thou mayest eat whatsoever thy soul lusteth after*. There is a natural and regular appetite, which it is lawful to gratify with temperance and sobriety, not taking too great a pleasure in the gratification, nor being uneasy if it be crossed. The unclean, who might not eat of the holy things, yet might eat of the same sort of flesh, when it was only used as common food. The distinction between clean persons and unclean was sacred, and designed for the preserving of the honour of their holy feasts, and therefore must not be brought into their ordinary meals.

This permission has a double restriction.

1. They must eat according to the blessing which God had given them, v. 15. Note, It is not only our wisdom, but our duty, to live according to our estates, and not to spend above what we have. As it is unjust on the one hand to hoard what should be laid out, so it is much more unjust, to lay out more than we have; for what is not our own, must needs be another's, who is thereby robbed and defrauded. And this, I say, is much more unjust, because it is easier afterward to distribute what has been unduly spared, and so to make a sort of restitution for the wrong, than it is to repay to wife, and children, and creditors, what has been unduly spent. Between these two extremes let wisdom find the mean, and then let watchfulness and resolution keep it.

2. They must not eat blood; (v. 16. and again, v. 23.) *Only be sure that thou eat not the blood*; (v. 24.) *Thou shalt not eat it*; and, (v. 25.) *Thou shalt not eat it, that it may go well with thee*. When they could not bring the blood to the altar, to pour it out there before the Lord, as belonging to him, they must pour it out upon the earth, as not belonging to him, because it was the life, and therefore, as an acknowledgment, belonged to him who gives life, and, as an atonement, belonged to him to whom life is forfeited. Bishop Patrick thinks one reason why they were forbidden thus strictly the eating of blood, was, to prevent the superstitions of the old idolaters about the blood of their sacrifices, which they thought their demons delighted in, and by eating of which they imagined that they had communion with them.

VI. They are forbidden to keep up either their own corrupt usages in the wilderness, or the corrupt usages of their predecessors in the land of Canaan.

1. They must not keep up those improper customs which they had got into in the wilderness, and which were connived at in consideration of the present unsettledness of their condition; (v. 8, 9.) *Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day*. Never was there a better governor than Moses, and one would think never a better opportunity of keeping up good order and discipline than now among the people of Israel, when they lay so closely encamped under the eye of their governor; and yet it seems there was much amiss, and that many irregularities had crept in among them. We must never expect to see any society perfectly pure and right, and as it should be, till we come to the heavenly Canaan. They had sacrifices, and religious worship, courts of justice and civil government, and by the stoning of the man that *gathered sticks on the sabbath day*, it appears that there was great strictness used in guarding the most weighty matters of the law; but being frequently upon the remove, and always at uncertainty, (1.) They could none of them observe the solemn feasts, and the rights of cleansing, with the exactness that the law required. And, (2.) Those among them that were disposed to do amiss, had opportunity given them to do it unobserved, by the frequent interruptions which their removes gave to the administration of justice. But (says Moses) when you come to Canaan, ye *shall not do as we do here*. Note, When the people of God are in an unsettled condition, that may be tolerated and dispensed with, which would by no means be allowed at another time. Cases of necessity are to be considered while the necessity continues; but that must not be done in Canaan, which was indulged in the wilderness. While a house is in the building a great deal of dirt and rubbish is suffered to lie by it, which must all be taken away when the house is built. Moses was now about to lay down his life and government, and it is a comfort to him to foresee that Israel would be better in the next reign than they had been in his.

2. They must not worship the Lord by any of those rites or ceremonies which the nations of Canaan had made use of in the service of their gods, v. 29-32. They must not so much as *inquire* into the modes and forms of idolatrous worship. What good would it do them to *know the depths of Satan*? Rev. 2. 24. It is best to be ignorant of that which there is danger of being infected by. They must not introduce the customs of idolaters, (1.) Because it would be absurd to make those their patterns, whom God had made their slaves and captives, cut off, and destroyed from before them. The Canaanites had not flourished and prospered so much in the service of their gods, as that the Israelites should be invited to take up their customs. Those are wretchedly besotted indeed, who will walk in

the way of sinners, after they have seen their end. (2.) Because some of their customs were most barbarous and inhuman, and such as trampled, not only upon the light and law of nature, but upon natural affection itself, as *burning their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods*, (v. 31.) the very mention of which is sufficient to make it odious, and possess us with a horror of it. (3.) Because their idolatrous customs were *an abomination to the Lord*, and the translating of them into his worship, would make even that an abomination, and an affront to him, by which they should give him honour, and by which they hoped to obtain his favour. The case is had indeed, when the sacrifice itself is become an abomination, Prov. 15. 8. He therefore concludes, (v. 32.) with the same caution concerning the worship of God, which he had before given concerning the word of God, (ch. 4. 2.) "*Ye shall not add thereto any inventions of your own, under pretence of making the ordinance either more significant or more magnificent; nor diminish from it, under pretence of making it more easy and practicable, or of setting aside that which may be spared; but observe to do all that, and that only, which God has commanded.*" We may then hope in our religious worship to obtain the divine acceptance, when we observe the divine appointment. God will have his own work done in his own way.

### CHAP. XIII.

Moses is still upon that necessary subject, *concerning the peril of idolatry*. In the close of the foregoing chapter, he had cautioned them against the peril that might arise from their predecessors the Canaanites. In this chapter, he cautions them against the rise of idolatry from among themselves; they must take heed lest any should draw them to idolatry, I. By the pretence of prophecy, v. 1. . 5. II. By the pretence of friendship and relation, v. 6. . 11. III. By the pretence of numbers, v. 12. . 18. But in all these cases the temptation must be resolutely resisted, and the tempters punished and cut off.

1. **I**F there arise among you a prophet, or a sign or a wonder, 2. And the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; 3. Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him. 5. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in: So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

Here is.

1. A very strange supposition, v. 1, 2. (1.) It is strange that there should arise any among themselves, especially any pretending to vision and prophecy, who should move them to *go and serve*

*other gods*. Was it possible that any who had so much knowledge of the methods of divine revelation, as to be able to personate a prophet, should yet have so little knowledge of the divine nature and will, as to go himself, and entice his neighbours *after other gods*? Could an Israelite ever be guilty of such impiety? Could a man of sense ever be guilty of such absurdity? We see it in our own day, and therefore may think it the less strange; multitudes that profess both learning and religion, yet exciting both themselves and others, not only to worship God by images, but to give divine honour to saints and angels, which is no better than *going after other Gods to serve them*; such is the power of strong delusions. (2.) It is yet more strange that the sign or wonder given for the confirmation of this false doctrine, should come to pass. Can it be thought that God himself should give any countenance to such a vile motion? Did ever a false prophet work a true miracle? It is only supposed here, for two reasons; [1.] To strengthen the caution here given against hearkening to such a one. "Though it were possible that he should work a true miracle, yet you must not believe him if he tells you, you must serve other gods, for the divine law against that is certainly perpetual and unalterable." The supposition is like that, (Gal. 1. 8.) *If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you*; which does not prove it possible that an angel should preach another gospel, but strongly expresses the certainty and perpetuity of that which we have received. So here, [2.] It is to fortify them against the danger of impostures, and lying wonders, (2 Thess. 2. 9.) "Suppose the credentials he produces, be so artfully counterfeited, that you cannot discern the cheat, nor disprove them, yet if they are intended to draw you to the service of other gods, that alone is sufficient to disprove them: no evidence can be admitted against so clear a truth as that of the Unity of the Godhead, and so plain a law as that of worshipping the *one only living and true God*." We cannot suppose that the God of truth should set his seal of miracles to a lie, to so gross a lie as is supposed, in that temptation, *Let us go after other Gods*. But if it be asked, Why is this false prophet permitted to counterfeit this broad seal? It is answered here, (v. 3.) "*The Lord your God proveth you*." He suffers you to be set upon by such a temptation, to try your constancy, that both they that are perfect, and they that are false and corrupt, may be made manifest. It is to prove you; therefore see that you acquit yourselves in the trial, and stand your ground."

2. Here is a very necessary charge given in this case. (1.) Not to yield to the temptation, (v. 3.) "*Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet*." Not only thou shalt not do the thing he tempts thee to, but thou shalt not so much as patiently hear the temptation, but reject it with the utmost disdain and detestation. Such a suggestion as this, is not to be so much as parleyed with, but the ear must be stopped against it; *Get thee behind me, Satan*;" some temptations are so grossly vile, that they will not bear a debate, nor may we so much as give them the hearing. What follows, (v. 4.) *Ye shall walk after the Lord*, may be looked upon, [1.] As prescribing a preservative from the temptation; "Keep close to your duty, and you keep out of harm's way." God never leaves us till we leave him. Or, [2.] As furnishing us with an answer to the temptation; say, "It is written, *Thou shalt walk after the Lord, and cleave unto him*; and therefore what have I to do with idols?" (2.) Not to spare the tempter, v. 5. That prophet shall be *put to death*, both to punish him for the attempt he has made, (the seducer must die, though none were seduced by him: a design upon the crown is treason,)

and to prevent his doing further mischief. This is called *putting away the evil*. There is no way of removing the guilt but by removing the guilty; if such a criminal be not punished, they that should do it, make themselves responsible. And thus the mischief must be put away; the infection must be kept from spreading, by cutting off the gangrened limb, and putting away the mischief-makers. Such dangerous diseases as these must be taken in time.

6. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; 7. *Name-ly*, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth; 8. Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; 9. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 11. And all Israel shall hear, and fear; and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Further provision is made by this branch of the statute, against receiving the infection of idolatry from those that are near and dear to us.

1. It is the policy of the tempter to send his solicitations by the hand of those whom we love, whom we least suspect of any ill design upon us, and whom we are desirous to please, and apt to conform ourselves to. The enticement here is supposed to come from a brother or child that are near by nature; from a wife or friend that are near by choice; and are to us as *our own souls*, v. 6. Satan tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We are therefore concerned to stand upon our guard against a bad proposal, when the person that proposes it, can pretend to an interest in us; that we may never sin against God in compliment to the best friend we have in the world. The temptation is supposed to be private; he will *entice thee secretly*, implying that idolatry is a work of darkness, which dreads the light, and covets to be concealed; and which the sinner promises himself, and the tempter promises him, secrecy and security in. Concerning the false gods proposed to be served, (1.) The tempter suggests, that the worshipping of these gods was the common practice of the world; and if they limited their adorations to an invisible Deity, they were singular, and like nobody, for these gods were the *gods of the people round about them*, and indeed of all the nations of the earth, v. 7. This suggestion draws men away from religion and godliness, that it is an unfashionable thing; and they make their court to the world and the flesh, because these are the *gods of the people that are round about them*. (2.) Moses suggests, in opposition to this, that it had not been the practice of their ancestors; they are gods which *thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers*. Those that are born of godly parents, and

have been educated in pious exercises, when they are enticed to a vain, loose, careless way of living, should remember that those are ways which *they have not known, they nor their fathers*. And will they thus degenerate?

2. It is our duty to prefer God and religion before the best friends we have in the world. (1.) We must not, in complaisance to our friends, break *God's law*, (v. 8.) "*Thou shalt not consent to him, nor go with him to his idolatrous worship, no not for company, or curiosity, or to gain a better interest in his affections.*" It is a general rule, *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not*, Prov. 1. 10. (2.) We must not, in compassion to our friends, obstruct the course of God's justice. He that offers such a thing, must not only be looked upon as an enemy, or dangerous person, whom one should be afraid of, and swear the peace against, but as a criminal or traitor, whom, in zeal for our sovereign Lord, his crown and dignity, we are bound to inform against, and cannot conceal without incurring the guilt of a great misprision; (v. 9.) *Thou shalt surely kill him*. By this law the persons enticed were bound to prosecute the seducer, and to give evidence against him before the proper judges, that he might suffer the penalty of the law, and that without delay, which the Jews say is here intended in that phrase, as it is in the Hebrew, *killing thou shalt kill him*: neither the prosecution nor the execution must be deferred; and he that was first in the former, must be first in the latter, to shew that he stood to his testimony, "*Thy hand shall be first upon him; to mark him out as an anathema*, and then the hands of all the people, to put him away as an accursed thing." The death he must die was that which was looked upon among the Jews as the severest of all other. He must be stoned: and his accusation written is, that he has sought to thrust thee away, by a kind of violence, *from the Lord thy God*, v. 10. Those are certainly our worst enemies, that would *thrust us from God* our best Friend; and whatever draws us to sin, separates between us and God, it is a design upon our life, and to be resented accordingly. And, *lastly*, here is the good effect of this necessary execution, (v. 11.) *All Israel shall hear and fear*. They ought to hear and fear; for the punishment of crimes committed is designed in *terrorem—to terrify*, and so to prevent their repetition. And it is to be hoped they will hear and fear, and by the severity of the punishment, especially when it is at the prosecution of a father, a brother, or a friend, will be made to conceive a horror of the sin, as exceedingly sinful, and to be afraid of incurring the like punishment themselves. Smite the scorner that sins presumptuously, and the simple that is in danger of sinning carelessly, will beware.

12. If thou shalt hear *say* in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, 13. *Certain men*, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; 14. Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, *if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you*; 15. Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the

edge of the sword. 16. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be a heap for ever; it shall not be built again. 17. And there shall cleave naught of the cursed thing to thine hand; that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; 18. When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do *that which* is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Here the case is put of a city revolting from its allegiance to the God of Israel, *and serving other gods*.

I. The crime is supposed to be committed, 1. By one of the cities of Israel, that lay within the jurisdiction of their courts; the church then *judged them only that were within*, 1 Cor. 5. 12, 13. And even when they were ordered to *preserve* their religion in the first principles of it, by fire and sword, yet they were not allowed by fire and sword to *propagate* it. They that are born within the allegiance of a prince, if they take up arms against him, are dealt with as traitors, but foreign invaders are not so. The city that is here become idolatrous, is supposed formerly to have worshipped the true God, but now to be withdrawn to other gods; *whi*h intimates how great the crime is, and how sore the punishment will be, of those that, *after they have known the way of righteousness, turn aside from it*, 2 Pet. 2. 21. 2. It is supposed to be committed by the generality of the inhabitants of the city, for we may conclude that if a considerable number did retain their integrity, those only that were guilty, were to be destroyed, and the city was to be spared for the sake of the righteous in it; *for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* No doubt, he shall. They are supposed to be drawn to idolatry, by *certain men, the children of Belial*, men that would endure no yoke, so it signifies; that neither fear God nor regard man, but shake off all restraints of law and conscience, and are perfectly lost to all manner of virtue; these are they that say, "Let us serve other gods," that will not only allow, but will countenance and encourage, our immoralities. Belial is put for *the Devil*, (2 Cor. 6. 15.) and the children of Belial are his children. These withdraw the inhabitants of the city; for a little of this old leaven, when it is entertained, soon leavens the whole lump.

II. The cause is ordered to be tried with a great deal of care, (v. 14.) *Thou shalt inquire and make search*. They must not proceed upon common fame, or take the information by hearsay, but must examine the proofs, and not give judgment against them unless the evidence was clear, and the charge fully made out. God himself, before he destroyed Sodom, is said to come down and see whether its crimes were according to the clamour, Gen. 18. 21. In judicial processes it is requisite that time, and care, and pains, be taken to find out the truth, and that search be made without any passion, prejudice, or partiality. The Jewish writers say, that though particular persons who were idolaters, might be judged by the inferior courts, the defection of a city must be tried by the great Sanhedrim; and if it appear that they are thrust away to idolatry,

they send two learned men to them to admonish and reduce them. If they repent, all is well; if not, then all Israel must go up to war against them, to testify their indignation against idolatry, and to stop the spreading of the contagion.

III. If the crime were proved, and the criminals were incorrigible, the city was to be wholly destroyed. If there were a few righteous men in it, no doubt, they would remove themselves and their families out of such a dangerous place, and then all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, must be put to the sword, (v. 15.) all the spoil of the city, both shop-goods, and the furniture of houses, must be brought into the market-place and burned, and the city itself must be laid in ashes and never built again, v. 16. The soldiers are forbidden, upon pain of death, to convert any of the plunder to their own use, v. 17. It was a devoted thing, and dangerous to meddle with it, as we find in the case of Achan. Now, 1. God enjoins this severity, to show what a jealous God he is in the matters of his worship, and how great a crime it is to serve other gods. Let men know that God will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images. 2. He expects that magistrates, having their honour and power from him, should be concerned for his honour, and use their power for *terror to evil doers, else they bear the sword in vain*. 3. The faithful worshippers of the true God must take all occasions to show their just indignation against idolatry, much more against atheism, infidelity, and irreligion. 4. It is here intimated that the best expedient for the turning away of God's anger from a land, is to execute justice upon the *wicked of the land*, (v. 17.) that the Lord may *turn from the fierceness of his anger*, which was ready to break out against the whole nation, for the wickedness of that one apostate city. It is promised that if they would thus root wickedness out of their land, God would multiply them. They might think it impolitic, and against the interest of their nation, to ruin a whole city, for a crime relating purely to religion, and that they should be more sparing of the blood of Israelites: "Fear not that," (says Moses,) "God will multiply you the more; the body of your nation will lose nothing by the letting out of this corrupt blood." *Lastly*, Though we do not find this law put in execution in all the history of the Jewish church, (Gibeah was destroyed, not for idolatry, but immorality,) yet for the neglect of the execution of it upon the inferior cities that served idols. God himself, by the army of the Chaldeans, put it in execution upon Jerusalem the head city, which, for its apostasy from God, was utterly destroyed and laid waste, and lay in ruins seventy years. Though idolaters may escape punishment from men, (nor is this law in the letter of it binding now, under the gospel,) yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgments. The New Testament speaks of communion with idolaters, as a sin which, above any other, *provokes the Lord to jealousy*, and dares him as if we were *stronger than he* 1 Cor. 10. 21, 22.

### CHAP. XIV.

Moses, in this chapter, teaches them, I. To distinguish themselves from their neighbours by a singularity, 1. In their mourning, v. 1, 2. 2. In their meat, v. 3. 21. II. To devote themselves unto God, and, in token of that, to give him his dues out of their estates, the yearly tithe, and that, every third year, for the maintenance of their religious feasts, the Levites, and the poor, v. 22. 29.

I. **YE** are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead: 2. For thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath

chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth. 3. Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing. 4. These are the beasts which ye shall eat; the ox, the sheep, and the goat. 5. The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow-deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois. 6. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat. 7. Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof: *therefore* they are unclean unto you. 8. And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase. 9. These ye shall eat of all that *are* in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat: 10. And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it is unclean unto you. 11. Of all clean birds ye shall eat. 12. But these are *they* of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray, 13. And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind, 14. And every raven after his kind, 15. And the owl, and the night-hawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk after his kind, 16. The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan, 17. And the pelican, and the gier-eagle, and the cormorant, 18. And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat. 19. And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten. 20. *But* of all clean fowls ye may eat. 21. Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou *art* a holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

Moses here tells the people of Israel,

I. How God had dignified them, as a peculiar people, with three distinguishing privileges which were their honour, and figures of those spiritual blessings in heavenly things, with which God has in Christ blessed us. 1. Here is *election*, the Lord hath chosen thee, v. 2. Not for their own merit, or for any good works foreseen, but because he would magnify the riches of his power and grace among them. He did not choose them because they were by their own dedication and subjection a peculiar people to him above other nations, but he chose them that they might be so by his grace; and thus were believers chosen, Eph. 1. 4. 2. Here is *adoption*, (v. 1.) "Ye are the children of the Lord your God, formed by him into a people, owned by him as his people, nay, his family, a people near unto him,

nearer than any other." *Israel is my son, my first born*; not because he needed children, but because they were orphans and needed a father. Every Israelite is indeed a *child of God*, a partaker of his nature and favour, his love and blessing; *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!* 3. Here is *sanctification*, (v. 2.) *Thou art a holy people*; separated and set apart for God, devoted to his service, designed for his praise, governed by a holy law, graced by a holy tabernacle, and the holy ordinances relating to it. God's people are obliged to be holy, and if they are holy, are indebted to the grace of God that makes them so. The Lord has set them apart for himself, and qualified them for his service and the enjoyment of him, and so has made them *holy to himself*.

II. How they ought to distinguish themselves by a sober singularity from all the nations that were about them. And God having thus advanced them, let not them debase themselves by admitting the superstitious customs of idolaters, and, by making themselves like them, put themselves upon the level with them. *Be ye the children of the Lord your God*; so the Seventy read it, as a command, that is, "Carry yourselves as becomes the children of God, and do nothing to disgrace the honour, and forfeit the privileges, of the relation."

In two things particularly they must distinguish themselves;

1. In their mourning. *Ye shall not cut yourselves*, v. 1. This forbids, (as some think,) not only their cutting themselves at their funerals, either to express their grief, or with their own blood to appease the infernal deities, but their wounding and mangling themselves in the worship of their gods, as Baal's prophets did, (1 Kings 18. 28.) or their marking themselves by incisions in their flesh, for such and such deities, which in them, above any, would be an inexcusable crime, who in the sign of circumcision bore about with them in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jehovah. So that,

(1.) They are forbidden to deform or hurt their own bodies upon any account. Methinks this is like a parent's charge to his little children, that are foolish, careless, and wilful, and are apt to play with knives, *Children, ye shall not cut yourselves*. This is the intention of those commands which oblige us to deny ourselves; the true meaning of them, if we understood them right, would appear to be, *Do yourselves no harm*. And this also is the design of those providences which most cross us, to remove from us those things by which we are in danger of doing ourselves harm. Knives are taken from us, lest we cut ourselves. They that are dedicated to God, as a holy people, must do nothing to disfigure themselves; the body is for the Lord, and is to be used accordingly.

(2.) They are forbidden to disturb and afflict their own minds with inordinate grief for the loss of near and dear relations; "Ye shall not express or exasperate your sorrow, even upon the most mournful occasions, by cutting yourselves, and making baldness between your eyes, like men enraged, or resolutely hardened in sorrow for the dead, as those that have no hope." 1 Thess. 4. 13. It is an excellent passage which Mr. Ainsworth here quotes from one of the Jewish writers, who understands this as a law against immoderate grief for the death of our relations. *If your father* (for instance) *dies, you shall not cut yourselves*, that is, *you shall not sorrow more than is meet, for you are not fatherless, you have a Father, who is great, living, and permanent, even the holy blessed God*, whose children ye are, v. 1. *But an infidel*, (says he,) *when his father dies, hath no father that can help him in time of need; for he hath said to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth,*



(Jer. 2. 27.) *therefore he weeps, cuts himself, and makes him bald.* We that have a God to hope in, and a heaven to hope for, must bear up ourselves with that hope under every burthen of this kind.

2. They must be singular in their meat. Many sorts of flesh, which were wholesome enough, and which other people did commonly eat, they must religiously abstain from, as unclean. This law we had before, (Lev. 11. 2.) where it was largely opened. It seems plainly, by the connexion here, to be intended as a mark of peculiarity; for their observance of it would cause them to be taken notice of in all mixed companies as a separate people, and would preserve them from mingling themselves with, and conforming themselves to, their idolatrous neighbours.

(1.) Concerning beasts, here is a more particular enumeration of those which they were allowed to eat, than was in Leviticus, to show that they had no reason to complain of their being restrained from eating swine's flesh, and hares, and rabbits, (which were all that were then forbidden, but are now commonly used,) when they were allowed so great a variety, not only of that which we call butcher's meat, (v. 4.) which alone was offered in sacrifice, but of venison, which they had great plenty of in Canaan, *the hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow-deer*, (v. 5.) which, though never brought to God's altar, was allowed them at their own table. See *ch. 12. 22.* When of all these (as Adam of *every tree of the garden*) they might freely eat, those were inexcusable, who, to gratify a perverse appetite, or (as should seem) in honour of their idols, and in participation of their idolatrous sacrifices, *ate swine's flesh, and made broth of abominable things* (made so by this law) *in their vessels*, Isa. 65. 4.

(2.) Concerning fish, there is only one general rule given, that whatsoever had not fins and scales, (as shell-fish and eels, beside leeches and other animals in the water that are not proper food,) was *unclean and forbidden*, v. 9, 10.

(3.) No general rule is given concerning fowl, but those are particularly mentioned that were to be unclean to them, and there are few or none of them which are here forbidden, that are now commonly eaten; and whatsoever is not expressly forbidden, is allowed, v. 11. 20. *Of all clean fowls you may eat.*

They are further forbidden, [1.] To eat the flesh of any creature that died of itself, because the blood was not separated from it, and beside the ceremonial uncleanness which it lay under, (from Lev. 11. 39.) it is not wholesome food, nor ordinarily used among us, except by the poor. [2.] To *see the a kid in its mother's milk*, either to gratify their own luxury, supposing it a dainty bit, or in conformity to some superstitious custom of the heathen. The Chaldee paraphrasts read it, *Thou shalt not eat flesh-meats and milk-meats together.* And so it would forbid the use of butter, as sauce to any flesh. Now as to all these precepts concerning their food, *First*, It is plain in the law itself, that they belonged only to the Jews, and were not moral, nor of perpetual use, because not of universal obligation; for what they might not eat themselves, they might give to a stranger, a proselyte of the gate, that had renounced idolatry, and therefore was permitted to live among them, though not circumcised; or, they might sell to an alien, a mere Gentile, that came into their country for trade, but might not settle in it, v. 21. They might feed upon that which an Israelite might not touch; which is a plain instance of their peculiarity, and their being a holy people. *Secondly*, It is plain in the gospel, that they are now antiquated and repealed. For every creature of God is good, and nothing now to be refused, or called common and unclean, 1 Tim. 4. 4.

22. Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase

of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 23. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. 24. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee; 25. Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: 26. And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, 27. And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. 28. At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: 29. And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

We have here a part of the statute concerning tithes. The productions of the ground were twice tithed, so that, putting both together, a fifth part was devoted to God out of their increase, and only four parts of five were for their own common use; and they could not but own they paid an easy rent, especially since God's part was disposed of to their own benefit and advantage. The first tithe was for the maintenance of their Levites, who taught them the good knowledge of God, and ministered to them in holy things; this is supposed, as anciently due, and is entailed upon the Levites as an inheritance, by that law, Numb. 18. 24, &c. But it is the second tithe that is here spoken of, which was to be taken out of the remainder, when the Levites had had their's.

I. They are here charged to separate it, and set it apart for God; (v. 22.) *Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed.* The Levites took care of their own, but the separating of this was left to the owners themselves, the law encouraging them to be honest, by reposing a confidence in them, and so trying their fear of God. They are bid to tithe *truly*, that is, to be sure to do it, and to do it faithfully, and carefully, that God's part might not be diminished either with design or by oversight. Note, We must be sure to give God his full dues out of our estates; for being but stewards of them, it is required that we be faithful, as those that must give account.

II. They are here directed how to dispose of it, when they had separated it. Let every man lay by

as God prospers him and gives him success, and then let him lay out in pious uses as God gives him opportunity; and it will be easier to lay out, and the proportion will be more satisfying, when first we have laid by. This second tithe may be disposed of,

1. In works of piety, for the first two years after the year of release. They must bring it up, either in kind, or the full value of it, to the place of the sanctuary, and there must spend it in holy feasting before the Lord. If they could do it with any convenience, they must bring it in kind; (v. 23.) but if not, they might turn it into money, (v. 24, 25.) and that money must be laid out in something to feast upon before the Lord. The comfortable cheerful using of what God has given us, with temperance and sobriety, is really the honouring of God with it. Contentment, holy joy, and thankfulness, make every meal a religious feast. The end of this law we have, (v. 23.) *That thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always*; it was to keep them right and firm to their religion, (1.) By acquainting them with the sanctuary, the holy things, and the solemn services that were there performed; what they read the appointment of in their Bibles, it would do them good to see the observance of in the tabernacle; it would make a deeper impression upon them, which would keep them out of the snares of the idolatrous customs. Note, It will have a good influence upon our constancy in religion, *never to forsake the assembling of ourselves together*, Heb. 10. 25. By the comfort of the communion of saints, we may be kept to our communion with God. (2.) By using them to the most pleasant and delightful services of religion. Let them *rejoice before the Lord, that they may learn to fear him always*. The more pleasure we find in the ways of religion, the more likely we shall be to persevere in those ways. One thing they must remember in their pious entertainments, that is, to bid their Levites welcome to them. Thou shalt not *forsake the Levite*, (v. 27.) "Let him never be a stranger to thy table, especially when thou eatest before the Lord."

2. Every third year this tithe must be disposed of at home in works of charity, v. 28, 29. *Lay it up within thy own gates*, and let it be given to the poor, who, knowing the provision this law had made for them, no doubt, would come to seek it; and that they might make the poor familiar to them, and not disdain their company, they are here directed to welcome them to their houses; "Hither let them come, and eat and be satisfied." In this charitable distribution of the second tithe, they must have an eye to the poor ministers, and add to their encouragement by entertaining them; next, to poor strangers, not only for the supply of their necessities, but to put a respect upon them, and so to invite them to turn proselytes; and next, to the fatherless and widow, who, though perhaps they might have a competent maintenance left them, yet should not be supposed to live so plentifully and comfortably as they had done in months past, and therefore they were to countenance them, and help to make them easy by inviting them to this entertainment. God has a particular care for widows and fatherless, and he requires that we should have the same. It is his honour, and will be our's, to help the helpless. And if we thus serve God, and do good with what we have, it is promised here, that the Lord our God will *bless us in all the work of our hand*. Note, (1.) The blessing of God is all in all to our outward prosperity; and without that blessing, the work of our hands which we do, will bring nothing to pass. (2.) The way to obtain that blessing is to be diligent and charitable. The blessing descends upon the working hand; "Expect not that God should bless thee in thy idleness and love of ease, but in all the *work* of thy hand." It is the

hand of the diligent, with the blessing of God upon it, that makes rich, Prov. 10. 4, 22. And it descends upon the giving hand; he that thus scatters, certainly increases, and the liberal soul will be made fat. It is an undoubted truth, though little believed, that to be charitable to the poor, and to be free and generous in the support of religion, and any good work, is the surest and safest way of thriving. *What is lent to the Lord, will be repaid with abundant interest*, Ezek. 44. 30.

## CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, Moses gives orders, I. Concerning the release of debts, every seventh year, (v. 1..6.) with a caution that that be no hindrance to charitable lending, v. 7..11. II. Concerning the release of servants after seven years' service, v. 12..18. III. Concerning the sanctification of the firstlings of cattle to God, v. 19..23.

1. **A**T the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2. 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. 3. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it *again*: but that which is thine with thy brother, thine hand shall release; 4. Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: 5. Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. 6. For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee. 7. If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; 8. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth. 9. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him naught; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. 10. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. 11. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in the land.

Here is,

I. A law for the relief of poor debtors, such (we

may suppose) as were insolvent. Every seventh year was a year of release, in which the ground rested from being tilled, and servants were discharged from their services; and among other acts of grace, this was one, that they who had borrowed money, and had not been able to pay it before, should this year be released from it; and though, if they were able, they were afterward bound in conscience to repay it, yet from henceforth the creditor should never recover it by law. Many good expositors think it only forbids the exacting of the debt in the year of release, because, no harvest being gathered in that year, it could not be expected that men should pay their debts then, but that afterward it might be sued for and recovered: so that the release did not extinguish the debt, but only stayed the process for a time. But others think it was a release of the debt for ever; and that seems more probable; yet under certain limitations expressed or implied. It is supposed that the debtor was an Israelite, (v. 3.) an alien could not take the benefit of this law: and that he was poor, (v. 4.) that he did not borrow for trade or purchase, but for the subsistence of his family; and that now he could not pay it without reducing himself to poverty, and coming under a necessity of seeking relief in other countries, which might be his temptation to revolt from God. The law is not, that the creditor shall not receive the debt, if the debtor, or his friends for him, can pay it; but he shall not exact it by a legal process. The reasons of this law are, 1. To put an honour upon the sabbatical year, *because it is called the Lord's release*, v. 2. That was God's year for their land, as the weekly sabbath was God's day for themselves, their servants and cattle; and as by the resting of the ground, so by the release of their debts, God would teach them to depend upon his providence. This year of release typified the grace of the gospel, in which is proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, and by which we obtain the release of our debts, that is, the pardon of our sins, and we are taught to forgive injuries, as we are and hope to be forgiven of God. 2. It was to prevent the falling of any Israelite into extreme poverty: so the margin reads, v. 4. *To the end there shall be no poor among you*, none miserably and scandalously poor, to the reproach of their nation and religion, the reputation of which they ought to preserve. 3. God's security is here given by a divine promise, that whatever they lost by their poor debtors, it should be made up to them in the blessing of God upon all they had and did, v. 4-6. Let them take care to do their duty, and then God would bless them with such great increase, that what they might lose by bad debts, if they generously remitted them, should not be missed out of their stock at the year's end. Not only, *the Lord shall bless thee*, (v. 4.) but, *he doth bless thee*, v. 6. It is altogether inexcusable, if, though God has given us abundance, so that we have not only enough, but to spare, we are rigorous and severe in our demands from our poor brethren; for our abundance should be the supply of their wants, that at least there may not be such an inequality as is between two extremes, 2 Cor. 8. 14. They must also consider that their land was God's gift to them, that all their increase was the fruit of God's blessing upon them, and therefore that they were bound in duty to him to use and dispose of their estates as he should order and direct them. And, *lastly*, if they would remit what little sums they had lent to their poor brethren, it is promised that they should be able to lend great sums to their rich neighbours, *even to many nations*, (v. 6.) and should be enriched by those loans. Thus the nations should become subject to them, and dependent upon them, as *the borrower is servant to the lender*, Prov. 22. 7. To be

able to lend, and not to have need to borrow, we must look upon as a great mercy, and a good reason why we should do good with what we have, lest we provoke God to turn the scales.

II. Here is a law in favour of poor borrowers, that they might not suffer damage by the former law. Men would be apt to argue, *If the case of a man be so with his debtor*, that if the debt be not paid before the year of release, it shall be lost, it were better not to lend. "No," says this branch of the statute, "thou shalt not think such a thought." 1. It is taken for granted that there would be poor among them, who would have occasion to borrow, (v. 7.) and that there would never cease to be some such objects of charity, (v. 11.) *The poor shall never cease out of thy land*; though not such as were reduced to extreme poverty, yet such as would be behind-hand, and would have occasion to borrow; of such poor he here speaks, and such we have always with us; so that a charitable disposition may soon find a charitable occasion. 2. In such a case we are here commanded to lend or give, according to our ability, or the necessity of the case. *Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand*, v. 7. If the hand be shut, it is a sign the heart is hardened; for *if the clouds were full of rain, they would empty themselves*, Eccl. 11. 3. *Bowels of compassion* would produce liberal distributions, Jam. 2. 16. *Thou shalt not only stretch out thy hand to him to reach him some thing, but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, to lend him sufficient*, v. 8. Sometimes there is as much charity in prudent lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower to industry and honesty, and may put him into a way of helping himself. We are sometimes tempted to think, when an object of charity presents itself, we may choose whether we will give any thing or nothing; little or much; whereas it is here an express precept, (v. 11.) *I command thee*, not only to give, but to *open thy hand wide*, to give liberally. 3. Here is a caveat against that objection which might arise against charitable lending, from the foregoing law for the release of debts, (v. 9.) *Beware that there be not a thought*, a covetous ill-natured thought, in thy *Fertile heart*, "The year of release is at hand, and therefore I will not lend what I must then be sure to lose;" lest thy poor brother, whom thou refusest to lend to, complain to God, and it will be a sin, a great sin, to thee.

Note, (1.) The law is spiritual, and lays a restraint upon the thoughts of the heart. We mistake, if we think thoughts are free from the divine cognizance and check. (2.) That is a wicked heart indeed, that raises evil thoughts from the good law of God, as their's did, who, because God had obliged them to the charity of forgiving, denied the charity of giving. (3.) We must carefully watch against all those secret suggestions which would divert us from our duty, or discourage us in it. Those that would keep from the act of sin, must keep out of their minds the very thought of sin. (4.) When we have an occasion of charitable lending, if we cannot trust the borrower, we must trust God, and lend, hoping for nothing again in this world, but expecting it will be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, Luke 6. 35.—14. 14. (5.) It is a dreadful thing to have the cry of the poor against us, for God has his ear open to that cry, and, in compassion to them, will be sure to reckon with those that deal hardly with them. (6.) That which we think is our prudence, often proves sin to us; he that refused to lend, because the year of release was at hand, thought that he did wisely, and that men would *praise him as doing well for himself*, Ps. 49. 18. But he is here told that he did wickedly, and that God would condemn him as do-

ing ill to his brother; and we are sure that the *judgment of God is according to truth*, and that which he says is sin to us, will certainly be ruin to us, if it be not repented of.

4. Here is a command to give cheerfully, whatever we give in charity, *v. 10.* "*Thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest.*" Be not loath to part with thy money on so good an account, nor think it lost: grudge not a kindness to thy brother; and distrust not the providence of God, as if thou shouldest want that thyself, which thou givest in charity; but, on the contrary, let it be a pleasure and a satisfaction of soul to thee to think that thou art honouring God with thy substance, doing good, making thy brother easy, and laying up for thyself a good security for the time to come. What thou doest, do freely, for *God loves a cheerful giver,*" 2 Cor. 9. 7. 5. Here is a promise of a recompense in this life, *For this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee.* Covetous people say, "Giving undoes us;" no, giving cheerfully in charity will enrich us, it will *fill the barns with plenty*, (Prov. 3. 10.) and the soul with true comfort, Isa. 58. 10, 11.

12. And if thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. 13. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: 14. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press: *of that* wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. 15. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to-day. 16. And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee, (because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee,) 17. Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever: And also unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise. 18. It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

Here is,

1. A repetition of the law that had been given concerning Hebrew servants, who either had sold themselves for servants, or were sold by their parents through extreme poverty, or were sold by the court of judgment for some crime committed. The law was, (1.) That they should serve but six years, and in the seventh should go out free, *v. 12.* Compare Exod. 21. 2. And if the year of jubilee happened before he served out his time, that would be his discharge. God's Israel were a free people, and must not be compelled to perpetual slavery; thus are God's spiritual Israel called unto liberty. (2.) That if, when their six years were expired, they had no mind to go out free, but would rather continue in service, as having less care, though taking more pains, than their masters; in that case,

they must lay themselves under an obligation to serve for ever, that is, for life, by having *their ears bored to the door-posts*, *v. 16, 17.* Compare Exod. 21. 6. If hereby a man disgraced himself with some, as of a mean and servile spirit, that had not a due sense of the honour and pleasure of liberty; yet, we may suppose, with others he got reputation, as of a quiet contented spirit, humble, and diligent, and loving, and not given to change.

2. Here is an addition to this law, requiring them to put some small stock into their servants' hands to set up with for themselves, when they sent them out of their service, *v. 13, 14.* It was to be supposed that they had nothing of their own, and that their friends had little or nothing for them, else they would have been redeemed before they were discharged by law; they had no wages for their service, and all they got by their labour was their master's, so that their liberty would do them little good, having nothing to begin the world with, therefore they are here commanded to furnish them liberally with corn and cattle; no certain measure is prescribed, that is left to the master's generosity, who, probably, would have respect to the servant's merit and necessity; but the Jewish writers say, "He could not give less than the value of thirty shekels of silver, but as much more as he pleased." The maid-servants, though they were not to have their ears bored if they were disposed to stay, yet if they went out free, they were to have a gratuity given them; for to that those words refer, (*v. 17.*) *Unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise.*

The reasons for this are taken from the law of gratitude. They must do it, (1.) In gratitude to God, who had not only brought them out of Egypt, (*v. 15.*) but brought them out greatly enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. Let them not send their servants out empty, for they were not sent empty out of the house of bondage. God's tender care of us, and kindness to us, obliges us to be careful of, and kind to, those that have a dependence upon us. Thus we must *render according to the benefit done unto us.* (2.) In gratitude to their servants, *v. 18.* "Grudge not to give him a little out of thine abundance, for he has been worth a double hired servant unto thee." The days of the hiring at most were but three years, (Isa. 16. 14.) but he has served thee six years, and unlike the hired servant, without any wages." Masters and landlords ought to consider what need they have of, and what ease and advantage they have by, their servants and tenants, and should not only be just but kind to them. To these reasons it is added, as before in this chapter, (*v. 4, 6, 10.*) *The Lord thy God shall bless thee.* Then we may expect family-blessings, the springs of family-prosperity, when we make conscience of our duty to our family-relations.

19. All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep: 20. Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year, in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household. 21. And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God. 22. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, and as the

hart. 23. Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

Here is,

1. A repetition of the law concerning the firstlings of their cattle, that if they were males, they were to be *sanctified to the Lord*, (v. 19.) in remembrance of, and in thankfulness for, the sparing of the first-born of Israel, when the first-born of the Egyptians, both of man and beast, were slain by the destroying angel; (Exod. 13. 1, 15.) on the eighth day it was to be given to God, (Exod. 22. 30.) and to be divided between the priest and the altar, Numb. 18. 17, 18.

2. An addition to that law, for the further explanation of it, directing them what to do with the firstlings, (1.) That were females. "Thou shalt *do no work with the female firstlings of the cow*, nor shear those of the sheep," (v. 19.) of them the learned Bishop Patrick understands it. Though the female firstlings were not so entirely sanctified to God as the males, nor so early as at eight days old, yet they were not to be converted by the owners to their own use as their other cattle, but must be offered to God as peace-offerings, or used in a religious feast, at the year's end, v. 20. *Thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God*, as directed, ch. 12. 18. (2.) But what must they do with those that were blemished, ill-blemished? v. 21. Were it male or female, it must not be brought near the sanctuary, nor used either for sacrifice or for holy feasting, for it would not be fit to honour God with, nor to typify Christ, who is a *Lamb without blemish*: yet it must not be reared, but killed and eaten at their own houses as common food; (v. 22.) only they must be sure *not to eat it with the blood*, v. 23. The frequent repetition of which caution intimates what need the people had of it, and what stress God laid upon it. What a mercy it is that we are not under this yoke! We are not dieted as they were; we make no difference between a first calf, or lamb, and the rest that follow: let us therefore realize the gospel-meaning of this law, devoting ourselves and the first of our time and strength to God, as a kind of first-fruits of his creatures; and using all our comforts and enjoyments to his praise, and under the direction of his law, as we have them all by his gift.

## CHAP. XVI.

IN this chapter, we have, I. A repetition of the laws concerning the three yearly feasts; in particular, That of the passover, v. 1..8. That of pentecost, v. 9..12. That of tabernacles, v. 12..15. And the general law concerning the people's attendance on them, v. 16, 17. II. The institution of an inferior magistracy, and general rules of justice given to those that were called into office, v. 18..20. III. A caveat against groves and images, v. 21, 22.

1. **O**BERVE the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. 2. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there. 3. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, *even* the bread of affliction; (for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste;) that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth

out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. 4. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days; neither shall there *any thing* of the flesh which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. 5. Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of the gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee: 6. But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. 7. And thou shalt roast and eat *it* in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. 8. Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day *shall be* a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work *therein*. 9. Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from *such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn*. 10. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a free-will-offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give *unto the LORD thy God*, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: 11. And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there. 12. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes. 13. Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: 14. And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within thy gates. 15. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. 16. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: 17. Every man *shall give*

as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

Much of the communion between God and his people Israel was kept up, and a face of religion preserved in the nation, by the three yearly feasts, the institution of which, and the laws concerning them, we have several times met with already; and here they are repeated.

I. The law of the passover; so great a solemnity, that it made the whole month, in the midst of which it was placed, considerable, (*v. 1.*) *Observe the month Abib.* Though one week only of that month was to be kept as a festival, yet their preparations before must be solemn, and their reflections upon it, and improvements of it afterward, so serious, as to amount to an observation of the whole month. The month of Abib, or of *new fruits*, as the Chaldee translates it, answers to our March, (or part of March, and part of April,) and was by a special order from God, in remembrance of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, made the beginning of their year, (*Exod. 12. 2.*) which before was reckoned to begin in September.

This month they were to keep the passover, in remembrance of their being brought out of Egypt by night, *v. 1.* The Chaldee paraphrasts expound it, "Because they came out of Egypt by daylight," there being an express order that they should not stir out of their doors till morning, *Exod. 12. 22.* One of them expounds it thus; "He brought thee out of Egypt, and did wonders by night." The other, "and thou shalt eat the passover by night." The laws concerning it are,

1. That they must be sure to sacrifice the passover in the place that God should choose, (*v. 2.*) and in no other place, *v. 5. 7.* The passover was itself a sacrifice; hence Christ, as our Passover, is said to be sacrificed for us, (*1 Cor. 5. 7.*) and many other sacrifices were offered during the seven days of the feast, (*Numb. 28. 19, &c.*) which are included here, for they are said to be sacrificed of the flock and the herd, whereas the passover itself was only of the flock, either a lamb or a kid: now no sacrifice was accepted but from the altar that sanctified it, it was therefore necessary that they should go up to the place of the altar; for though the paschal lamb was entirely eaten by the owners, yet it must be killed in the court, the blood sprinkled, and the inwards burned upon the altar. By confining them to the appointed place, he kept them to the appointed rule, which they would have been apt to vary from, and to introduce foolish inventions of their own, had they been permitted to offer these sacrifices within their own gates, from under the inspection of the priests. They were also hereby directed to have their eye up to God in the solemnity, and the desire of their hearts toward the remembrance of his name, being appointed to attend there where he had chosen to place his name, *v. 2. and 6.* But when the solemnity was over, they might turn and go unto their tents, *v. 7.* Some think that they might, if they pleased, return the very morning after the paschal lamb was killed and eaten, the priests and Levites being sufficient to carry on the rest of the week's work; but the first day of the seven is so far from being the day of their dispersion, that it is expressly appointed for a holy convocation; (*Lev. 23. 7. Numb. 28. 18.*) therefore we must take it as Jonathan's paraphrase expounds it, *In the morning after the end of the feast thou shalt go to thy cities.* And it was the practice to keep together the whole week, *2 Chron. 35. 17.*

2. That they must eat unleavened bread for seven days, and no leavened bread must be seen in all their coats, *v. 3, 4, 8.* The bread they were confined

to, is here called *bread of affliction*, because neither grateful to the taste, nor easy of digestion, and therefore proper to signify the heaviness of their spirits in their bondage, and to keep in remembrance the haste in which they came out, the case being so urgent, that they could not stay for the leavening of the bread they took with them for their march. The Jewish writers tell us, that the custom at the passover supper was, that the master of the family brake this unleavened bread, and gave to every one a piece of it, saying, *This is* (that is, this signifies, represents, or commemorates, which explains that saying of our Saviour, *This is my body*) *the bread of affliction which your fathers did eat in the land of Egypt.* The gospel-meaning of this feast of unleavened bread the apostle gives us, *1 Cor. 5. 7, Christ our Passover being sacrificed for us*, and we having participated of the blessed fruits of that Sacrifice to our comfort, let us keep the feast in a holy conversation, free from the leaven of malice toward our brethren, and hypocrisy toward God, and with the unleavened bread of sincerity and love. Lastly, Observe concerning the passover, for what end it was instituted, *That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of Egypt*, not only on the day of the passover, or during the seven days of the feast, but all the days of thy life, (*v. 3.*) as a constant inducement to obedience. Thus we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death at certain times, that we may remember it at all times, as a reason why we should live to him that died for us and rose again.

II. Seven weeks after the passover, the feast of pentecost was to be observed, concerning which they are here directed, 1. From whence to number their seven weeks, *From the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn;* (*v. 9.*) that is, from the morrow after the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, for on that day (though it is probable the people did not begin their harvest till the feast was ended) messengers were sent to reap a sheaf of barley, which was to be offered to God as the first-fruits, *Lev. 23. 10.* Some think it implies a particular care which Providence would take of their land with respect to the weather, that their harvest should be always ripe and ready for the sickle just at the same time. 2. How they were to keep this feast. (1.) They must bring an offering unto God, *v. 10.* It is here called a tribute of a free-will offering. It was required of them as a tribute to their Sovereign Lord and Owner, under whom they held all they had; and yet because the law did not determine the quantum, but it was left to every man's generosity to bring what he chose, and whatever he brought he must give cheerfully; it is therefore called a free-will offering. It was a grateful acknowledgment of the goodness of God to them in the mercies of these corn-harvests now finished, and therefore must be according as God had blessed them. Where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly. (2.) They must rejoice before God, *v. 11.* Holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praises, which are as the language and expression of holy joy. They must rejoice in their receivings from God, and in their returns of service and sacrifice to him; our duty must be our delight as well as our enjoyments. They must have their very servants to rejoice with them, "for remember (*v. 12.*) that thou wast a bond-man, and wouldest have been very thankful if thy taskmasters would have given thee some time and cause for rejoicing; and thy God did bring thee out to keep a feast with gladness; therefore be pleasant with thy servants, and make them easy." And, it should seem, those general words, *thou shalt observe and do these statutes*, are added here for a particular reason, because this feast was kept in



remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, fifty days after they came out of Egypt; now the best way of expressing our thankfulness to God for his favour to us in giving us his law, is, to *observe and do according to the precepts* of it.

III. They must keep the *feast of tabernacles*, v. 13., 15. Here is no repetition of the law concerning the sacrifices that were to be offered in great abundance at this feast, (which we had at large, Numb. 29, 12, &c.) because the care of these belonged to the priests and Levites, who had not so much need of a repetition as the people had, and because the spiritual part of the service, which consisted in holy joy, was most pleasing to God, and was to be the perpetual duty of a gospel conversation, which this feast was typical of. Observe what stress is laid upon it here. *Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast; (v. 14.) and because the Lord shall bless thee, thou shalt surely rejoice, v. 15.* Note, 1. It is the will of God that his people should be a cheerful people. If they that were under the law, must rejoice before God, much more must we that are under the grace of the gospel, which makes it our duty, not only as here, to *rejoice in our feasts*, but to *rejoice evermore; to rejoice in the Lord always.* 2. When we rejoice in God ourselves, we should do what we can to assist others also to rejoice in him, by comforting the mourners, and supplying the necessities, that even *the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, may rejoice with us.* See Job 29, 13. 3. We must rejoice in God, not only because of what we have received, and are receiving from him daily, but because of what he has promised, and we expect to receive yet further from him, because *he shall bless thee, therefore thou shalt rejoice.* Those that make God their Joy, may *rejoice in hope*, for he is faithful that has promised.

*Lastly*, The laws concerning the three solemn feasts are summed up, (v. 16, 17.) as often before, Exod. 23, 16, 17.—34, 23. The general commands concerning them are, 1. That all the males must then make their personal appearance before God, that by their frequent meeting to worship God, at the same place, and by the same rule, they might be kept faithful and constant to that holy religion which was established among them. 2. That none must appear before God empty, but every man must bring some offering or other, in token of a dependence upon God, and gratitude to him. And God was not unreasonable in his demands; let every man but give as he was able, and no more was expected. The same is still the rule of charity, 1 Cor. 16, 2. They that give to their power, shall be accepted, but they that give beyond their power, are accounted worthy of double honour, (2 Cor. 8, 3.) as the poor widow that gave *all she had*, Luke 21, 4.

18. Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. 19. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. 20. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 21. Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou

shalt make thee. 22. Neither shalt thou set thee up *any* image, which the LORD thy God hateth.

Here is,

1. Care taken for the due administration of justice among them, that controversies might be determined, matters in variance adjusted, the injured righted, and the injurious punished. While they were encamped in the wilderness, they had *judges and officers* according to their numbers, rulers of thousands and hundreds, Exod. 18, 25. When they came to Canaan, they must have them according to their towns and cities, in all their gates; for the courts of judgment sat in the gates.

Now, (1.) Here is a commission given to these inferior magistrates. "Judges, to try and pass sentence, and officers, to execute their sentences, shalt thou make thee." However the persons were pitched upon, whether by the nomination of their Sovereign, or by the election of the people, *the powers were ordained of God*, Rom. 13, 1. And it was a great mercy to the people thus to have justice brought to their doors, that it might be more expeditious and less expensive; a blessing, which we of this nation ought to be very thankful for. Pursuant to this law, beside the great Sanhedrim that sat at the sanctuary, consisting of 70 elders, and a president, there was in the larger cities, such as had in them above 120 families, a court of 23 judges; in the smaller cities, a court of three judges. See this law revived by Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 19, 5, 8.

(2.) Here is a command given to these magistrates to do justice in the execution of the trust reposed in them. Better not judge at all, than not judge with just judgment; according to the direction of the law, and the evidence of the fact. The judges are here cautioned not to do wrong to any, (v. 19.) nor to take any gifts, which would tempt them to do wrong. This law had been given before; (Exod. 23, 8.) and they are charged to do justice to all, (v. 20.) "*That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.*" Adhere to the principles of justice; act by the rules of justice, countenance the demands of justice, imitate the patterns of justice, and pursue with resolution that which appears to be just. *Justice, justice, shalt thou follow.*" This is that which the magistrate is to have in his eye, on this he must be intent, and to this all personal regards must be sacrificed, to do *right to all, and wrong to none.*

2. Care taken for the preventing of all conformity to the idolatrous customs of the heathen, v. 21, 22. They must not only not join with the idolaters in their worships, nor visit their groves, nor bow before the images which they had set up, but, (1.) They must not plant a grove, nor so much as a tree, near God's altar, lest they should make it look like the altars of the false gods. They made groves the places of their worship, either to make it secret, but that which is true and good, desires the light rather; or to make it solemn, but the worship of the true God has enough in itself to make it so, and needs not the advantage of such a circumstance. (2.) They must not set up any image, statue, or pillar, to the honour of God, for it is a thing which the Lord hates; nothing belies or reproaches him more, or tends more to corrupt and debauch the minds of men, than representing and worshipping by an image that God who is an infinite and eternal Spirit.

## CHAP. XVII.

The charge of this chapter is, I. Concerning the purity and perfection of all those animals that were offered in sacrifices, v. 1. II. Concerning the punishment of those

that worshipped idols, v. 2. . 7. III. Concerning appeals from the inferior courts to the great Sanhedrim, v. 8. . 13. IV. Concerning the choice and duty of a king, v. 14. . 20.

1. **THOU** shalt not sacrifice unto the **LORD** thy God *any* bullock or sheep wherein is blemish, *or* any evil-favouredness; for that is an abomination unto the **LORD** thy God. 2. If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the **LORD** thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the **LORD** thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3. And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; 4. And it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it*, and inquired diligently, and behold, *it be true*, and the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought in Israel: 5. Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even* that man or that woman, and shall stone them with stones, till they die. 6. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. 7. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

Here is,

1. A law for preserving the honour of God's worship, by providing that no creature that had any blemish, should be offered in sacrifice to him, v. 1. This caveat we have often met with, *Thou shalt not sacrifice that which has any blemish*, which renders it unsightly, or *any evil matter or thing*, (as the following word might better be rendered,) any sickness or weakness, though not discernible at first view: it is an abomination to God. God is the best of beings, and therefore whatsoever he is served with, ought to be the best in its kind. And the Old Testament sacrifices in a special manner must be so, because they were types of Christ, who is a *Lamb without blemish or spot*, (1 Pet. 1. 19.) perfectly pure from all sin and all appearance of it. In the latter times of the Jewish church, when by the captivity in Babylon they were cured of idolatry, yet they were charged with profaneness in the breach of this law, inasmuch as they *offered the blind and the lame and the sick for sacrifice*, Mal. 1. 8.

2. A law for the punishing of those that worshipped false gods. It was made a capital crime to seduce others to idolatry, (ch. 13.) here it is made no less to be seduced. If the *blind thus mislead the blind*, both must fall into the ditch. Thus God would possess them with a dread of that sin, which they must conclude exceeding sinful, when so many sanguinary laws were made against it, and would deter those from it that would not otherwise be persuaded against it: and yet the law which works death, proved ineffectual.

See here, (1.) What the crime was, against which

this law was levelled, serving or worshipping other gods, v. 3. That which was the most ancient and plausible idolatry, is specified, worshipping the sun, moon, and stars; and if that was so detestable a thing, much more was it so to worship stocks and stones, or the representations of mean and contemptible animals. Of this it is said, [1.] That it is what God had not commanded. He had again and again forbidden it; but it is thus expressed, to intimate that if there had been no more against it, this had been enough, (for in the worship of God, his institution and appointment must be our rule and warrant,) and that God never commanded his worshippers to debase themselves so far as to do homage to their fellow-creatures: had God commanded them to do it, they might justly have complained of it as a reproach and disparagement to them; yet when he has forbidden it, they will, from a spirit of contradiction, put this indignity upon themselves. [2.] That it is *wickedness in the sight of God*, v. 2. Be it ever so industriously concealed, he sees it, and he it ever so ingeniously palliated, he hates it: it is a sin in itself exceedingly heinous, and the highest affront that can be offered to Almighty God. [3.] That it is a transgression of the covenant. It was on this condition that God took them to be his peculiar people, that they should serve and worship him only as their God, so that if they gave to any other the honour which was due to him alone, the covenant was void, and all the benefit of it forfeited. Other sins were transgressions of the command, but this was a transgression of the covenant. It was spiritual adultery, which breaks the marriage-bond. [4.] That it is abomination in Israel, v. 4. Idolatry was bad enough in any, but it was particularly abominable in Israel, a people so blessed with peculiar discoveries of the will and favour of the only true and living God.

(2.) How it must be tried. Upon information given of it, or any ground of suspicion that any person whatsoever, man or woman, had served other gods, [1.] Inquiry must be made, v. 4. Though it appears not certain at first, it may afterwards upon search appear so; and if it can possibly be discovered, it must not be unpunished; if not, yet the very inquiry concerning it would possess the country with a dread of it. [2.] Evidence must be given in, v. 6. How heinous and dangerous soever the crime is, yet they must not punish any for it, unless there were good proof against them, by two witnesses at least. They must not, under pretence of honouring God, wrong an innocent man. This law, which requires two witnesses in case of life, we had before, Numb. 35. 30. it is quoted, Matth. 18. 16.

(3.) What sentence must be passed and executed. So great a punishment as death, so great a death as stoning, must be inflicted on the idolator, be it man or woman, for the infirmity of the weaker sex would be no excuse, v. 5. The place of the execution must be the gate of the city, that the shame might be the greater to the criminal, and the warning the more public to all others. The hands of the witnesses, in this as in other cases, must be first upon him, that is, they must cast the first stone at him, thereby avowing their testimony, and solemnly imprecating the guilt of his blood upon themselves if their evidence was false. This custom might be of use to deter men from false witness-bearing. The witnesses are really, and therefore it was required that they should be actually, the death of the malefactor. But they must be followed, and the execution completed, by the hands of all the people, who were thus to testify their detestation of the crime, and to *put the evil away from among them*, as before, ch. 13. 9.

8. If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, *being* matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9. And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment: 10. And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee. 11. According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand nor to the left. 12. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Courts of judgment were ordered to be erected in every city, (*ch.* 16. 18.) and they were empowered to hear and determine causes according to law, both those which we call pleas of the crown, and those between party and party; and we may suppose that ordinarily they ended the matters that were brought before them, and their sentence was definitive; but,

1. It is here taken for granted, that sometimes a case might come into their court too difficult for those inferior judges to determine, who could not be thought to be so learned in the laws as those that presided in the higher courts. So that (to speak in the language of our law) they must find a special verdict, and take time to advise before the giving of judgment; (*v.* 8.) *If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment*, which it would be no dishonour to the judges to own the difficulty of, suppose it between *blood and blood*, the blood of a person which cried, and the blood of him that was charged with the murder, which was demanded; when it was doubtful, upon the evidence, whether it was wilful or casual; or between *plea and plea*, the plea, that is, the bill, or declaration of the plaintiff, and the plea of the defendant; between *stroke and stroke*, in actions of assault and battery; in these and the like cases, though the evidence were plain, yet doubts might arise about the sense and meaning of the law, and the application of it to the particular case.

2. These difficult cases, which hitherto had been brought to Moses, according to Jethro's advice, were, after his death, to be brought to the supreme power, wherever it was lodged, whether in a judge, when there was such an extraordinary person raised up, and qualified for that great service, as Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, &c. or in the High Priest, when he was by the eminency of his gifts called of God to preside in public affairs, as Eli; or, if no singular person were marked by heaven for this honour, then in the priests and Levites, (or in

the priests, who were Levites of course,) who not only attended the sanctuary, but met in council, to receive appeals from the inferior courts, who might reasonably be supposed, not only to be best qualified by their learning and experience, but to have the best assistance of the Divine Spirit for the deciding of doubts, (*v.* 9, 11, 12. They are not appointed to consult the Urim and Thummim, for it is supposed that that was to be consulted only in cases relating to the public, either the body of the people, or the prince: but in ordinary cases, the wisdom and integrity of those that sat at the stern, must be relied on, their judgment concerning the meaning of the law must be acquiesced in, and the sentence must be passed accordingly: and though their judgment had not the divine authority of an oracle, yet beside the moral certainty it had, as the judgment of knowing, prudent, and experienced men, it had the advantage of a divine promise, implied in those words, (*v.* 9.) *They shall show thee the sentence of judgment*; it had also the support of a divine institution, by which they were made the supreme judicature of the nation.

3. The definitive sentence given by the judge, priest, or great council, must be obeyed by the parties concerned, upon pain of death, "*Thou shalt do according to their sentence*, (*v.* 10.) thou shalt observe to do it, thou shalt not decline from it, (*v.* 11.) *to the right hand or to the left*." Note, It is for the honour of God and the welfare of a people, that the authority of the higher power be supported, and the due order of government observed; that those be obeyed, who are appointed to rule, and that every soul be subject to them in all these things that fall within their commission. Though the party thought himself injured by the sentence, (as every man is apt to be partial in his own cause,) yet he must needs be subject, must stand to the award, how displeasing soever, and bear, or lose, or pay, according to it, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. But if an inferior judge contradict the sentence of the higher court, and will not execute the orders of it, or a private person refuse to conform himself to their sentence, the contumacy must be punished with death; though the matter were never so small in which the opposition was made, *That man shall die, and all the people shall hear and fear*, *v.* 12, 13. See here, (1.) The evil of disobedience: rebellion, and stubbornness, from a spirit of contradiction and opposition to God, or those in authority under him, from a principle of contempt, and self-willedness, are as witchcraft and idolatry. To differ in opinion from weakness and infirmity may be excused, and must be borne with; but to do presumptuously, in pride and wickedness, (as the ancient translations explain it,) this is to take up arms against the government, and is an affront to him by whom the powers that be, are ordained. (2.) The design of punishment; that others may hear and fear, and not do the like. Some would be so considerate as to infer the heinousness of the offence from the grievousness of the penalty, and therefore would detest it; and others would so far consult their own safety, as to cross their humours by conforming to the sentence, rather than to sin against their own heads, and forfeit their lives by going contrary to it. From this law the apostle infers the soreness of the punishment they will be thought worthy of, that trample on the authority of the Son of God, *Heb.* 10. 28, 29.

14. When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me; 15.

Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother. 16. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: 19. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20. That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

After the laws which concerned subjects, fitly follow the laws which concern kings; for they that rule others, must themselves remember that they are under command. Here are laws given,

I. To the electors of the empire, what rules they must go by in making their choice, v. 14, 15. 1. It is here supposed that the people would, in process of time, be desirous of a king, whose royal pomp and power would be thought to make their nation look great among their neighbours. Their having a king is neither promised as a mercy, nor commanded as a duty, (nothing could be better for them than the divine regimen they were under,) but it is permitted them, if they desired it: if they would but take care to have the ends of government answered, and God's laws duly observed and put in execution, they should not be tied to any one form of government, but should be welcome to have a king. Though something irregular is supposed to be the principle of the desire, that they might be like the nations, (whereas God many ways distinguished them from the nations,) yet God would indulge them in it, because he intended to serve his own purposes by it, in making the regal government typical of the kingdom of the Messiah. 2. They are directed in their choice. If they will have a king over them, as God foresaw they would, (though it does not appear that ever the motion was made till almost 400 years after,) then they must, (1.) Ask counsel at God's mouth, and make him king whom God shall choose; and happy it was for them that they had an oracle to consult in so weighty an affair, and a God to choose for them who knows infallibly what every man is, and will be. Kings are God's viceroyants, and therefore it is fit that he should have the choosing of them: God had himself been in a particular manner Israel's King, and if they set another over them, under him, it was necessary that he should nominate the person. Accordingly, when the people desired a king, they applied themselves to Samuel, a prophet of the Lord; and afterward, David,

Solomon, Jeroboam, Jehu, and others, were chosen by the prophets; and the people are reproved for not observing this law, (Hos. 8. 4.) *They have set up kings, but not by me*. In all cases, God's choice, if we can but know it, should direct, determine, and over-rule, our's. (2.) They must not choose a foreigner under pretence of strengthening their alliances, or of the extraordinary fitness of the person, lest a strange king should introduce strange customs or usages, contrary to those that were established by the divine law; but he must be *one from among thy brethren*, that he may be a type of Christ, who is *bone of our bone*, Heb. 2. 14.

II. Laws are here given to the prince that should be elected, for the due administration of the government.

1. He must carefully avoid every thing that would divert him from God and religion. Riches, honours, and pleasures, are the three great hindrances of godliness, (*the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,*) especially to these in high stations: against these therefore the king is here warned. (1.) He must not gratify the love of honour by multiplying horses, v. 16. He that rode upon a horse, (a stately creature,) in a country where asses and mules were generally used, looked very great; and therefore though he might have horses for his own saddle and chariots, yet he must not set *servants on horseback*, (Eccl. 10. 7.) nor have many horses for his officers and guards; when God was their King, his judges rode on asses; (Judg. 5. 10.—12. 14.) nor must he multiply horses for war, lest he should trust too much to them, Ps. 20. 7.—33. 17. Hos. 14. 3. The reason here given against his multiplying horses, is, because it would produce a greater correspondence with Egypt (which furnished Canaan with horses, 1 Kings 10. 28, 29.) than it was fit that the Israel of God should have, who were brought thence with such a high hand. *Ye shall return no more that way*; for fear of being infected with the idolatries of Egypt, (Lev. 18. 3.) to which they were very prone. Note, We should take heed of that commerce or conversation, by which we are in danger of being drawn into sin. If Israel must not return to Egypt, they must not trade with Egypt; Solomon got no good by it. (2.) He must not gratify the love of pleasure by multiplying wives, (v. 17.) as Solomon did to his undoing, (1 Kings 11. 1.) that his heart, being set upon them, turn not away from business, and every thing that is serious, and especially from the exercise of piety and devotion, to which nothing is a greater enemy than the indulgence of the flesh. (3.) He must not gratify the love of riches by greatly multiplying silver and gold. A competent treasure is allowed him, and he is not forbidden to be a good husband of it; but, [1.] He must not greatly multiply money so as to oppress his people by raising it, (as Solomon seems to have done, 1 Kings 12. 4.) nor so as to deceive himself, by trusting to it and setting his heart upon it, Ps. 62. 10. [2.] He must not multiply it to himself. David multiplied silver and gold, but it was for the service of God, (1 Chron. 29. 4.) not for himself; for his people, not for his own family.

2. He must carefully apply himself to the law of God, and make that his rule. This must be to him better than all riches, honours, and pleasures, than many horses or many wives, better than thousands of gold and silver.

(1.) He must write himself a copy of the law out of the original, which was in the custody of the priests that attended the sanctuary, v. 18. Some think that he was to write only this book of Deuteronomy, which is an abstract of the law, and the precepts of which, being mostly moral and judicial, concerned the king, more than the laws in Leviticus

and Numbers, which, being ceremonial, concerned chiefly the priests. Others think that he was to transcribe all the five books of Moses, which are called *the law*; and which were preserved together as the foundation of their religion. Now, [1.] Though the king might be presumed to have very fair copies by him from his ancestors, yet beside those, he must have one of his own: it might be presumed that their's were worn with constant use, he must have a fresh one to begin the world with. [2.] Though he had secretaries about him whom he might employ to write this copy, and who perhaps could write a better hand than he, yet he must do it himself, with his own hand, for the honour of the law, and that he might think no act of religion below him, to inure himself to labour and study, and especially that he might thereby be obliged to take particular notice of every part of the law, and by writing it might imprint it in his mind. Note, It is of great use for each of us to write down what we observe as most affecting and edifying to us, out of the scriptures and good books, and out of the sermons we hear. A prudent pen may go far toward making up the deficiencies of the memory, and the furnishing of the treasures of the good householder with things new and old. [3.] He must do this even when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom; provided that he had not done it before. When he begins to apply himself to business, he must apply himself to this in the first place. He that sits upon the throne of a kingdom, cannot but have his hands full. The affairs of his kingdom both at home and abroad call for a large share of his time and thoughts, and yet he must write himself a copy of the law. Let not those who call themselves men of business, think that this will excuse them from making religion their business; nor let great men think it any disparagement to them, to write for themselves those *great things of God's law which he hath written to them*, Hos. 8. 12.

(2.) Having a Bible by him of his own writing, he must not think it enough to keep it in his cabinet, but he must *read therein all the days of his life*, v. 19. It is not enough to have Bibles, but we must use them, use them daily, as the duty and necessity of every day require: our souls must have their constant meals of that manna; and if well digested, it will be true nourishment and strength to them. As the body is receiving benefit by its food continually, and not only when it is eating, so is the soul, by the word of God, if it *meditate therein day and night*, Ps. 1. 2. And we must persevere in the use of the written word of God as long as we live. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bibles, but will have a constant occasion for them, till they come to that world where knowledge and love will both be made perfect.

(3.) His writing and reading were all nothing, if he did not reduce to practice what he wrote and read, v. 19, 20. The word of God is not designed merely to be an entertaining subject of speculation, but to be a commanding rule of conversation. Let him know,

[1.] What dominion his religion must have over him, and what influence it must have upon him. *First*, It must possess him with a very reverent and awful regard to the divine majesty and authority. He must learn (and thus the most *learned* must be *ever learning*) *to fear the Lord his God*; and as high as he is, must remember that God is above him, and whatever fear his subjects owe to him, that, and much more, he owes to God as his King. *Secondly*, It must engage him to a constant observance of the law of God, and a conscientious obedience to it, as the effect of that fear. He must keep *all the words of this law*, (he is *custos utriusque tabule*—the *keeper of both tables*;) not only to take care that

others do them, but to do them himself as a humble servant to the God of heaven, and a good example to his inferiors. *Thirdly*, It must keep him humble; how much soever he is advanced, let him keep his spirit low, and let the *fear of his God prevent the contempt of his brethren*; and let not his heart be *lifted up above them*, so as to carry himself haughtily or disdainfully toward them, and to trample upon them; let him not conceit himself better than they, because he is greater, and makes a fairer show, but let him remember that he is the *minister of God to them for good*, (*major singulus*, but *minor universis*—*greater than any one*, but *less than the whole*.) It must prevent his errors, either on the *right hand*, or on the *left*, (for there are errors on both hands,) and keep him right, in all instances, to his God and to his duty.

[2.] What advantage his religion would be of to him. They that fear God and keep his commandments, will certainly fare the better for it in this world. The greatest monarch in the world may receive more benefit by religion, than by all the wealth and power of his monarchy. It will be of advantage, *First*, To his person. *He shall prolong his days in his kingdom*. We find in the history of the kings of Judah, that, generally, the best reigns were the longest, except when God shortened them for the punishment of the people; as Josiah's. *Secondly*, To his family; his children shall also prosper. Entail religion upon posterity, and God will entail a blessing upon it.

### CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter, I. The rights and revenues of the church are settled, and rules given concerning the Levites' ministration and maintenance, v. 1. . 8. II. The caution against the idolatrous abominable customs of the heathen is repeated, v. 9. . 14. III. A promise is given them of the spirit of prophecy to continue among them, and to centre at last in Christ, the Great Prophet; (v. 15. . 18.) wrath threatened against those that despise prophecy, (v. 19.) or counterfeit it, (v. 20.) and a rule given for the trial of it, v. 21, 22.

1. **T**HE priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. 2. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. 3. And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. 4. The first-fruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thy oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. 5. For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever. 6. And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose; 7. Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the LORD. 8. They shall have like portions to eat, besides that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

Magistracy and ministry are two divine institutions of admirable use for the support and advancement of the *kingdom of God among men*; laws concerning the former we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, directions are in this given concerning the latter. Land-marks are here set between the estates of the priests and those of the people.

I. Care is taken that the priests entangle not themselves with the affairs of this life, nor enrich themselves with the wealth of this world; they have better things to mind. *They shall have no part, nor inheritance with Israel*, that is, no share either in the spoils taken in war, or in the land that was to be divided by lot, v. 1. Their warfare and husbandry are both spiritual, and enough to fill their hands both with work and profit, and to content them. *The Lord is their inheritance*, v. 2. Note, Those that have God for their inheritance, according to the new covenant, should not be greedy of great things in the world; neither gripe what they have, nor grasp at more, but look upon all present things with the indifference which becomes those that believe God to be all-sufficient.

II. Care is likewise taken that they want not any of the comforts and conveniences of this life. Though God, who is a Spirit, is their Inheritance, it does not therefore follow that they must live upon the air: No,

1. The people must provide for them. They must have their *due from the people*, v. 3. Their maintenance must not depend upon the generosity of the people, but they must be by law entitled to it. He that is taught in the word, ought in justice to communicate to him that teaches him; and he that has the benefit of solemn religious assemblies, to contribute to the comfortable support of those that preside in such assemblies. (1.) The priests who in their courses served at the altar, had their share of the sacrifices, namely, the peace-offerings, that were brought while they were in waiting; beside the breast and shoulder, which were appointed them before, (Lev. 7. 32. . 34.) the cheeks and maw are here ordered to be given them; so far was the law from diminishing what was already granted, that it gave them an augmentation. (2.) The first-fruits which arose within such a precinct, were brought in, as it should seem, to the priests that resided among them, for their maintenance in the country; the *first of their corn and wine* for food, and the *first of their fleece* for clothing, (v. 4.) for the priests who were employed to teach others, ought themselves to learn, having food and raiment, to be therewith content. The first-fruits were devoted to God, and he constituted the priests his receivers; and if God reckons what is, in general, given to the poor, lent to him, to be repaid with interest, much more what is, in particular, given to poor ministers. There is a good reason given for this constant charge upon their estates, (v. 5.) because the Levites were *chosen of God*, and his choice must be owned and countenanced, and those honoured by us, whom he honours; and *because they stood to minister*, and ought to be recompensed for their attendance and labour, especially since it was *in the name of the Lord*, by his warrant, in his service, and for his praise, and this charge entailed upon their seed for ever; those who were thus engaged and thus employed, ought to have all due encouragement given them, as some of the most needful, useful members of their commonwealth.

2. The priests must not themselves stand in one another's light. If a priest, that by the law was obliged to serve at the altar, only in his turn, and was paid for that, should, out of his great affection to the sanctuary, devote himself to a constant attendance there, and quit the ease and pleasure of

the city in which he had his lot, for the satisfaction of serving the altar, the priests, whose turn it was to attend, must admit him both to join in the work, and to share in the wages, and not grudge him either the honour of the one, or the profit of the other, though it might seem to break in upon them, v. 6. . 8. Note, A hearty pious zeal to serve God and his church, though it may a little encroach upon a settled order, and there may be somewhat in it that looks irregular, yet ought to be gratified, and not discouraged. He that appears to have a hearty affection to the sanctuary, and loves dearly to be employed in the service of it, *in God's name let him minister*, he shall be as welcome to God, as the Levites, whose course it was to minister, and should be so to them. The settling of the courses was intended rather to secure those to the work that were not willing to do so much, than to exclude any that were willing to do more. And he that serves as a volunteer, shall have as good pay as the pressed men, *beside that which comes of the sale of his patrimony*. The church of Rome obliges those who leave their estates to go into a monastery, to bring the profits of their estate with them into the common stock of the monastery, for gain is their godliness; but here it is ordered that the pious devotee should reserve to himself the produce of his patrimony; for religion and the ministry were never appointed of God, however they have been abused by men, to serve a secular interest.

9. When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 10. There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, 11. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. 13. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. 14. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

One would not think there had been so much need, as it seems there was, to arm the people of Israel against the infection of the idolatrous customs of the Canaanites. Was it possible that a people so blessed with divine institutions, should ever admit the brutish and barbarous intentions of men and devils? Were they in any danger of making those their tutors and directors in religion, whom God had made their captives and tributaries? It seems they were in danger, and therefore, after many the like cautions, they are here charged not to do after the abominations of those nations, v. 9.

I. Some particulars are specified: as, 1. The consecrating of their children to Moloch, an idol that represented the sun, by making them to *pass through the fire*, and sometimes consuming them as sacrifices in the fire, v. 10. See the law against this, before, Lev. 18. 21. 2. Using arts of divination, to get the unnecessary knowledge of things to come; *enchantments, witchcrafts, charms*, &c. by which the power and knowledge peculiar to God, were attributed to the Devil, to the great reproach



both of God's counsels and of his providence, v. 10, 11. One would wonder that such arts and works of darkness, so senseless and absurd, so impious and profane, could be found in a country where divine revelation shone so clear; yet we find remains of them even there where Christ's holy religion is known and professed; such are the powers and policies of the *rulers of the darkness of this world*. But let those that give heed to fortune-tellers, or go to wizards for the discovery of things secret, that use spells for the cure of diseases, are in any league or acquaintance with familiar spirits, or form a confederacy with those that are—let them know that they can have no fellowship with God while thus they have fellowship with devils. It is amazing to think that there should be any pretenders of this kind in such a land, and day of light, as we live in.

II. Some reasons are given against their conformity to the customs of the Gentiles. 1. Because it would make them abominable to God. The things themselves being hateful to him, those that do them are an abomination; and miserable is that creature, that is become odious to its Creator, v. 12. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin: that must needs be an evil thing indeed, which provokes the God of mercy to detest the work of his own hands. 2. Because these abominable practices had been the ruin of the Canaanites, which ruin they were not only the witnesses but the instruments of. It would be the most inexcusable folly, as well as the most unpardonable impiety, for them to practise themselves those very things, for which they had been employed so severely to chastise others. Did the land spue out the abominations of the Canaanites, and shall Israel lick up the vomit? 3. Because they were *better taught*, v. 13, 14. It is an argument like that of the apostle against christians walking as the Gentiles walked; (Eph. 4. 17, 18. 20.) *Ye have not so learned Christ*. "It is true, these nations, whom God gave up to their own hearts' lusts, and suffered to walk in their own ways, (Acts 14. 16.) did thus corrupt themselves; but thou art not thus abandoned by the grace of God, the Lord thy God has not suffered thee to do so, thou art instructed in divine things, and hast first warning given thee of the evil of those practices; and therefore whatever others do it is expected that thou shouldst be *perfect with the Lord thy God*;" that is, "that thou shouldst give divine honours to him, to him only, and to no other, and not mix any of the superstitious customs of the heathen with his institutions." One of the Chaldee paraphrasts here takes notice of God's furnishing them with the oracle of Urim and Thummim, as a preservative from all unlawful arts of divination. They were fools, who would go to consult the father of lies, when they had such a ready way of consulting the God of truth.

15. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; 16. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. 18. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak un-

to them all that I shall command him. 19. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. 20. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. 21. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? 22. When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Here is,

I. The promise of the Great Prophet, with a command to receive him, and hearken unto him. Now,

1. Some think it is a promise of a succession of prophets that should for many ages be kept up in Israel. Beside the priests and Levites, their ordinary ministers, whose office it was to teach Jacob God's law, they should have prophets, extraordinary ministers, to reprove them for their faults, remind them of their duty, and to foretell things to come, judgments for warning, and deliverances for their comfort. Having these prophets, (1.) They need not use divinations, nor consult with familiar spirits, for they might inquire of God's prophets even concerning their private affairs, as Saul did when he was in quest of his father's asses, 1 Sam. 9. 6. (2.) They could not miss the way of their duty through ignorance or mistake, nor differ in their opinions about it, having prophets among them, whom, in every difficult doubtful case, they might advise with, and appeal to. These prophets were like unto Moses in some respects, though far inferior to him, Deut. 34. 10.

2. Whether a succession of prophets be included in this promise or not, we are sure that it is primarily intended as a promise of Christ, and it is the clearest promise of him that is in all the law of Moses. It is expressly applied to our Lord Jesus as the Messiah promised, (Acts 3. 22.—7. 37.) and the people had an eye to this promise when they said concerning him, *This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world*; (John 6. 14.) and it was his Spirit that spake in all the other prophets, 1 Pet. 1. 11. Observe,

(1.) What it is, that is here promised concerning Christ; what God promised Moses at mount Sinai, which he relates, (v. 18.) he promised the people, (v. 15.) in God's name; [1.] That there should come a Prophet, great above all the prophets, by whom God would make known himself and his will to the children of men, more fully and clearly than ever he had done before. He is the *Light of the world*, as prophecy was of the Jewish church, John 8. 12. He is the word by whom God speaks to us, John 1. 1. Heb. 1. 2. [2.] That God would raise him up from the midst of them. In his birth he should be one of that nation, should live among them, and be sent to them. In his resurrection he should be raised up at Jerusalem, and from thence his doctrine should go forth to all the world: thus God, having raised up his Son Christ Jesus, sent him to bless us. [3.] That he should be like unto Moses, only as much above him, as the other prophets came short of him. Moses was such a pro-

phet as was a law-giver to Israel, and their deliverer out of Egypt; and so was Christ, he not only teaches, but rules and saves; Moses was the founder of a new dispensation, by signs and wonders and mighty deeds; and so was Christ, by which he proved himself a Teacher come from God. Was Moses faithful? So was Christ; Moses as a servant, but Christ as a Son. [4.] That God would *put his words in his mouth*, v. 18. What messages God had to send to the children of men, he would send them by him, and give him full instructions what to say and do as a prophet. Hence our Saviour says, (John 7. 16.) *My doctrine is not mine originally, but his that sent me.* So that this great promise is performed; this Prophet is come, even Jesus, it is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

(2.) The agreeableness of this designed dispensation to the people's avowed choice and desire at mount Sinai, v. 16, 17. There God had spoken to them in thunder and lightning, out of the midst of the fire and thick darkness: every word made their ears tingle and their hearts tremble, so that the whole congregation was ready to die with fear: in this fright, they begged hard that God would not speak to them in this manner any more, (they could not bear it, it would overwhelm and distract them,) but that he would speak to them by men, like themselves, by Moses now, and afterward by other prophets like unto him. "Well," says God, "it shall be so; they shall be spoken to by men, whose terrors shall not make them afraid;" and to crown the favour beyond what they were able to ask or think, in the fulness of time, *the Word itself was made flesh*, and they saw his glory as of the *only begotten of the Father*, not, as at mount Sinai, full of majesty and terror, *but full of grace and truth*, John 1. 14. Thus, in answer to the request of those who were struck with amazement by the law, God promised the incarnation of his Son, though we may suppose it far from the thoughts of them that made the request.

(3.) A charge and command given to all people to hear and believe, hear and obey, this Great Prophet here promised: *Unto him ye shall hearken*; (v. 15.) and whoever will not hearken to him, shall be surely and severely reckoned with for his contempt, (v. 19.) *I will require it of him.* God himself applied this to our Lord Jesus in the voice that came out of the excellent glory, Matth. 17. 5. *Hear ye him*, that is, this is he concerning whom it was said by Moses of old, *Unto him ye shall hearken*; and Moses and Elias then stood by and assented to it. The sentence here passed on those that hearken not to this Prophet, is repeated and ratified in the New Testament, *He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him*, John 3. 36. *And how shall we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven?* Heb. 12. 25. The Chaldee paraphrase here reads it, *My Word shall require it of him*; which can be no other than a divine person, Christ the eternal Word, to whom the Father has committed all judgment, and by whom he will at the last day judge the world. Whoever turns a deaf ear to Jesus Christ, shall find that it is at his peril; the same that is the Prophet, is to be the Judge, John 12. 48.

II. Here is a caution against false prophets.

1. By way of threatening against the pretenders themselves, v. 20. Whoever sets up for a prophet, and produces either a commission from a false god, as the prophets of Baal, or a false and counterfeit commission from the true God, shall be deemed and adjudged guilty of high-treason against the crown and dignity of the King of kings, and that traitor shall be put to death, (v. 20.) namely, by the judgment of the great Sanhedrim, which, in process of time, sat at Jerusalem: and therefore our

Saviour says that a *prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem*, and lays the blood of the prophets at Jerusalem's door, Luke 13. 33, 34, whom therefore God himself would punish; yet *there* false prophets were supported.

2. By way of direction to the people, that they might not be imposed upon by pretenders; of which there were many, as appears, Jer. 23. 25. Ezek. 13. 6. 1 Kings 22. 6. It is a very proper question which they are supposed to ask, v. 21. Since it is so great a duty to hearken to the true prophets, and yet there is so much danger of being misled by false prophets, *How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?* By what marks may we discover the cheat? Note, It highly concerns us to have a right touchstone wherewith to try the word we hear, that we may know what that word is, which the Lord has not spoken. Whatever is directly repugnant to sense, to the light and law of nature, and to the plain sense of the written word, we may be sure is not that which the Lord has spoken; nor that which gives countenance and encouragement to sin, or has a manifest tendency to the destruction of piety or charity; far be it from God that he should contradict himself. The rule here given in answer to this inquiry, was adapted chiefly to that state, v. 22. If there was any cause to suspect the sincerity of a prophet, let them observe, if he gave them any sign, or foretold something to come, and the event was not according to his prediction, they might be sure he was not sent of God. This does not refer so much to the foretelling of mercies and judgments, (though as to those, and the difference between the predictions of mercies and judgments, there is a rule of discerning between truth and falsehood laid down by the prophet, Jer. 28. 8, 9.) but rather to the giving of signs on purpose to confirm their mission. Though the sign did come to pass, yet that would not serve to prove their mission, if they called him to serve other gods; that point had been already settled. Deut. 13. 1-3. But if the sign did not come to pass, that would serve to disprove their mission, "When Moses cast his rod upon the ground, (it is Bishop Patrick's explication of this,) and said it would become a serpent, if it had not accordingly been turned into a serpent, Moses had been a false prophet: if, when Elijah called for fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, none had come, he had been no better than the prophets of Baal." Samuel's mission was proved by this, That *God let none of his words fall to the ground*, 1 Sam. 3. 19, 20. And by the miracles Christ wrought, especially by that great sign he gave of his resurrection the third day, which came to pass as he foretold, it appeared that he was a Teacher come from God.

Lastly, They are bid not to be afraid of a false prophet; that is, not to be afraid of the judgments such a one might denounce to amuse people and strike terror upon them; nor to be afraid of executing the law upon them, when, upon a strict and impartial scrutiny, it appeared that he was a false prophet. This command not to fear a false prophet, implies that a true prophet, who proved his commission by clear and undeniable proofs, was to be feared, and it was at their peril if they offered him any violence, or put any slight upon him.

## CHAP. XIX.

The laws which Moses had hitherto been repeating and urging, mostly concerned the acts of religion and devotion toward God; but here he comes more fully to prove the duties of righteousness between man and man. This chapter relates, I. To the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, v. 1. . 13. II. To the eighth commandment, *Thou shalt not steal*, v. 14. III. To the ninth commandment *Thou shalt not bear false witness*, v. 15. . 21.

1 **WHEN** the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeededst them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses; 2. Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. 3. Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither. 4. And this is the case of the slayer which shall flee thither, that he may live. Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hateth not in time past; 5. As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live: 6. Lest the avenger of blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he *was* not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past. 7. Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee. 8. And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers; 9. If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, besides these three; 10. That innocent blood be not shed in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee. 11. But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: 12. Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. 13. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away *the guilt of innocent blood* from Israel, that it may go well with thee.

It was one of the precepts given to the sons of Noah, that *whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, that is, by the avenger of blood, Gen. 9. 6. Now here we have the law settled between blood and blood, between the blood of the murdered and the blood of the murderer, and effectual provision made,

I. That the cities of refuge should be a protection to him that slew another casually, so that he should not die for that as a crime, which was not his voluntary act, but only his unhappiness. The appointment of these cities of refuge we had before,

(Exod. 21. 13.) and the law laid down concerning them at large, Numb. 35. 10, &c. It is here repeated and direction is given concerning three things.

1. The appointing of three cities in Canaan for this purpose. Moses had already appointed three on that side Jordan, which he saw the conquest of; and now he bids them, when they were settled in the other part of the country, to appoint three more, *v. 1-3, 7.* The country was to be divided into three districts, as near as might be equal, and a city of refuge in the centre of each, so that every corner of the land might have one within reach. Thus Christ is not a Refuge at a distance which we must ascend to heaven, or go down to the deep for, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, Rom. 10. 8. The gospel brings salvation to *our door*, and there it knocks for admission, and, to make the flight of the delinquent the more easy, the way must be prepared, that led to the city of refuge. Probably, they had causeways or streetways leading to those cities, and the Jews say, that the magistrates of Israel, upon one certain day in the year, sent out messengers to see that those roads were in good repair, and they were to remove stumbling-blocks, mend bridges that were broken, and where two ways met, they were to set up a Mercurial post, with a finger to point the right way, on which was engraven in great letters, *Miklat, Miklat; Refuge, Refuge.* In allusion to this, gospel-ministers are to show people the way to Christ, and to assist and direct them in flying by faith to him for refuge. They must be ready to remove their prejudices, and help them over their difficulties. And, blessed be God, *the way of holiness*, to all that seek it faithfully, is a highway so plain, that *the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

2. The use to be made of these cities, *v. 4-6.* (1.) It is supposed it might so happen, that a man might be the death of his neighbour without any design upon him, (either from a sudden passion, or malice-prepense,) but purely by accident, as by the flying off of an axe-head, which is the instance here given, with which every case of this kind was to be compared, and by it adjudged. See how human life lies exposed daily, and what deaths we are often in, and what need therefore we have to be always ready, our souls being continually in our hands. How are the sons of men *snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them!* Eccl. 9. 12. An evil time indeed it is, when this happens not only to the slain but to the slayer. (2.) It is supposed that the relations of the person slain would be forward to avenge the blood; in affection to their friend, and in zeal for public justice. Though the law did not allow the avenging of any other affront or injury with death, yet the avenger of blood, the blood of a relation, shall have great allowances made for the heat of his heart, upon such a provocation as that, and his killing the man-slayer, though he was so by accident only, should not be accounted murder, if he did it before he got to the city of refuge, though it is owned he was not worthy of death. Thus would God possess people with a great horror and dread of the sin of murder: if mere chance-medley did thus expose a man, surely he that wilfully does violence to the blood of any person, whether from an old grudge, or upon a sudden provocation, must flee to the pit, and *let no man stay him*, (Prov. 28. 17.) yet the New Testament represents the sin of murder, as more heinous and more dangerous than even this law does, (1 John 3. 15.) *Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* (3.) It is provided that if an avenger of blood should be so unreasonable as to demand satisfaction for blood shed by accident only, then the city of refuge should protect the slayer. Sins of ignorance indeed do expose us to the wrath of God,

but there is relief provided, if by faith and repentance we make use of it. Paul that had been a persecutor, obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly; and Christ prayed for his crucifiers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

3. The appointing of three cities more for this use, in case God should hereafter enlarge their territories, and the dominion of their religion; that all those places which came under the government of the law of Moses in other instances, might enjoy the benefit of that law in this instance, *v. 8-10.* Here is, (1.) An intimation of God's gracious intention to enlarge their coast, as he promised to their fathers, if they did not by their disobedience forfeit the promise, the condition of which is here carefully repeated, that, if it were not performed, the reproach might lie upon them, and not on God. He promised to *give it, if thou shalt keep all these commandments*; not otherwise. (2.) A direction to them to appoint three cities more in their new conquests, which, the number intimates, should be as large as those their first conquests were; wherever the border of Israel went, this privilege must attend it, that *innocent blood be not shed, v. 10.* Though God is the Saviour and Preserver of all men, and has a tender regard to all lives, yet the blood of Israelites is in a particular manner precious to him, *Ps. 72. 14.* The learned Ainsworth observes, that the Jewish writers themselves own, that, the condition not being performed, the promise of the enlarging of their coast was never fulfilled; so that there was no occasion for ever adding these three cities of refuge; yet the *holy blessed God* (say they) *did not command it in vain, for in the days of Messiah the Prince, three other cities shall be added to these six: they expect it to be fulfilled in the letter, but we know that in Christ it has its spiritual accomplishment, for the borders of the gospel-Israel are enlarged, according to the promise, and in Christ, the Lord our Righteousness, refuge is provided for those that by faith fly unto him.*

II. It is provided that the cities of refuge should be no sanctuary or shelter to a wilful murderer, but even thence he should be fetched, and delivered to the avenger of blood, *v. 11-13.* 1. This shows that wilful murder must never be protected by the civil magistrate; he bears the sword of justice in vain, if he suffers those to escape the edge of it, that lie under the guilt of blood, which he by office is the avenger of. During the dominion of the papacy here in our own land, before the Reformation, there were some churches, and religious houses, (as they called them,) that were made sanctuaries for the protection of all sorts of criminals that fled to them, wilful murderers not excepted, so that (as Stamford says, in his *Pleas of the Crown, lib. 2. ch. 38.*) the government follows not Moses but Romulus, and it was not till about the latter end of Henry the Eighth's time, that this privilege of sanctuary for wilful murder was taken away; when in that, as in other cases, the word of God came to be regarded more than the dictates of the see of Rome. And some have thought it would be a completing of that instance of reformation, if the benefit of clergy were taken away for man-slaughter, that is, the killing of a man upon a small provocation, since this law allowed refuge only in case of that which our law calls chance-medley. 2. It may be alluded to, to show that in Jesus Christ there is no refuge for presumptuous sinners, that *go on still in their trespasses.* If we thus *sin wilfully*, sin and go on in it, *there remains no sacrifice,* Heb. 10. 26. Those that flee to Christ from their sins, shall be safe in him, but not those that expect to be sheltered by him in their sins. Salvation itself cannot save such, divine justice will fetch them even from the city of refuge, the protection of which they are not entitled to.

14. Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's land-mark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. 15. One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. 16. If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him *that which is wrong*; 17. Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges which shall be in those days; 18. And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, *if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother*; 19. Then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. 20. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. 21. And thine eye shall not pity; *but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

Here is a statute for the preventing of frauds and perjuries; for the divine law takes care of men's rights and properties, and has made a hedge about them. Such a friend is it to human society, and men's civil interest.

1. A law against frauds, *v. 14.* 1. Here is an implicit direction given to the first planters of Canaan, to fix land-marks, according to the distribution of the land to the several tribes and families by lot. Note, It is the will of God that every one should know his own; and that all good means should be used to prevent encroachments, and the doing and suffering of wrong. When right is settled, care must be taken that it be not afterwards unsettled; and that, if possible, no occasion of dispute may arise. 2. An express law to posterity not to remove those land-marks which were thus fixed at first, by which a man secretly got that himself, which was his neighbour's. This, without doubt, is a moral precept, and still binding, and to us it forbids, (1.) The invading of any man's right, and taking to ourselves that which is not our own, by any fraudulent arts or practices, as by forging, concealing, destroying, or altering, deeds and writings, which are our land-marks, to which appeals are made; or by shifting hedges, meer-stones, and boundaries. Though the land-marks were set by the hand of man, yet he was a thief and a robber by the law of God, that removed them. Let every man be content with his own lot, and just to his neighbours, and then we shall have no land-marks removed. (2.) It forbids the sowing of discord among neighbours, and doing any thing to occasion strife and law-suits; which is done (and it is very ill done) by confounding those things which should determine disputes, and decide controversies. And, (3.) It forbids breaking in upon the settled order and constitution of civil government, and the altering of ancient usages without just cause. This law supports the honour of prescriptions. *Consuetudo facit jus—Custom is to be held as law.*

II. A law against perjuries, which enacts two things:

1. That a single witness should never be admitted to give evidence in a criminal cause, so as that sentence should be passed upon his testimony, v. 15. This law we had before, Numb. 35. 30, and in this book, *ch.* 17. 6. This was enacted in favour to the prisoner, whose life and honour should not lie at the mercy of a particular person that had a pique against him; and for caution to the accuser, not to say that which he could not corroborate by the testimony of another. It is a just shame which this law put upon mankind, as false and not to be trusted; every man is by it suspected: and it is the honour of God's grace, that the record he has given concerning his Son, is confirmed both in heaven and in earth by *three witnesses*, 1 John 5. 7. *Let God be true and every man a liar*, Rom. 3. 4.

2. That a false witness should incur the same punishment which was to have been inflicted upon the person he accused, v. 16-21. (1.) The criminal here is a false witness, who is said to *rise up* against a man, not only because all witnesses stood up when they gave in their evidence, but because a false witness did indeed rise up as an enemy and an assailant against him whom he accused. *If two, or three*, or many witnesses, concurred in a false testimony, they were all liable to be prosecuted upon this law. (2.) The person wronged, or brought into peril by the false testimony, is supposed to be the appellee, v. 17. And yet if the person were put to death upon the evidence, and afterward it appeared to be false, any other person, or the judges themselves, *ex officio*—by virtue of their office, might call the false witness to account. (3.) Causes of this kind, having more than ordinary difficulty in them, were to be brought before the supreme court, *the priests and judges*, who are said to be *before the Lord*, because as other judges sat in the gates of their cities, so these at the gate of the sanctuary, *ch.* 17. 12. (4.) There must be great care in the trial, v. 18. A diligent inquisition must be made into the characters of the persons, and all the circumstances of the case, which must be compared, that the truth might be found out; which, where it is thus faithfully and impartially inquired into, Providence, it may be hoped, will particularly advance the discovery of. (5.) If it appeared that a man had knowingly and maliciously borne false witness against his neighbour, though the mischief he designed him thereby, was not effected, he shall undergo the same penalty which his evidence would have brought his neighbour under, v. 19. *Nec lex est justior ulla—Nor could any law be more just*. If the crime he accused his neighbour of, was to be punished with death, the false witness must be put to death; if with stripes, he must be beaten; if with a pecuniary mulct, he was to be fined the same sum. And because of those who considered not the heinousness of the crime, and the necessity of making this provision against it, it might seem hard to punish a man so severely for a few words' speaking, especially when no mischief did actually follow, it is added, (v. 21.) *Thine eye shall not pity*. No man needs to be more merciful than God. The benefit that will accrue to the public from this severity, will abundantly recompense it, v. 20, *They that remain, shall hear and fear*. Such exemplary punishments will be warnings to others not to attempt any such mischief, when they see how he that *made the pit and digged it, is fallen into the ditch which he made*.

## CHAP. XX.

This chapter settles the militia, and establishes the laws and ordinances of war, I. Relating to the soldiers. 1. Those must be encouraged, that were drawn up to battle, v. 1. 4. 2. Those must be dismissed and sent back

again, whose private affairs called for their attendance at home, (v. 5. 7.) or whose weakness and timidity unfitted them for service in the field, v. 8, 9. II. Relating to the enemies they made war with. 1. The treaties they must make with the cities that were far off, v. 10. 15. 2. The destruction they must make of the people into whose land they were going, v. 16. 18. 3. The care they must take, in besieging cities, not to destroy the fruit-trees, v. 19, 20.

1. **W**HEN thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 2. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach, and speak unto the people, 3. And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, You approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint; fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them: 4. For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. 5. And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. 6. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. 7. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in battle, and another man take her. 8. And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart. 9. And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

Israel was at this time to be considered rather as a camp, than as a kingdom, entering upon an enemy's country, and not yet settled in a country of their own; and, beside the war they were now entering on in order to their settlement, even after their settlement, they could neither protect nor enlarge their coast, without hearing the alarms of war: it was therefore needful that they should have direction given them in their military affairs: and in these verses they are directed in managing, marshalling, and drawing up, their own forces. And it is observable, that the discipline of war here prescribed, is so far from having anything in it harsh or severe, as is usual in martial law, that the intent of the whole is, on the contrary, to encourage the soldiers, and to make their service easy to them.

I. They that were disposed to fight, must be encouraged, and animated against their fears.

1. Moses here gives a general encouragement, which the leaders and commanders in the war



must take to themselves. *v. 1, "Be not afraid of them.* Though the enemy have ever so much the advantage, (being more than thou,) and though their armies be made up, in a great measure, of horses and chariots, which thou art not allowed to multiply, yet decline not coming to a battle with them, dread not the issue, nor doubt of success."

Two things they must encourage themselves with in their wars, provided they kept close to their God and their religion, otherwise they forfeited these encouragements. (1.) The presence of God with them, "*The Lord thy God is with thee,* and therefore thou art not in danger, nor needest thou be afraid." See Isa. 41. 10. (2.) The experience they and their fathers had had of God's power and goodness, in *bringing them out of the land of Egypt*, in defiance of Pharaoh and all his hosts, which was not only in general, a proof of the divine omnipotence, but to them in particular, a pledge of what God would do further for them. He that saved them from those greater enemies, would not suffer them to be run down by those that were every way less considerable, and thus to have all he had done for them, undone again.

2. This encouragement must be particularly addressed to the common soldiers by a priest appointed, and, the Jews say, anointed, for that purpose, whom they call *the Anointed of the war*, a very proper title for our anointed Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation. This priest, in God's name, was to animate the people; and who so fit to do that, as he whose office it was as priest to pray for them? For the best encouragements arise from the precious promises made to the prayer of faith. This priest must, (1.) Charge them not to be afraid, (*v. 3.*) for nothing weakens the hands so much as that which makes the heart tremble, *v. 3.* There is need of precept upon precept to this purport, as there is here, *Let not your hearts be tender*, (so the word is,) to receive all the impressions of fear, but let a believing confidence in the power and promise of God harden them. *Fear not, and do not make haste*, (so the word is,) for *he that believeth, doth not make more haste* than good speed. "Do not make haste either rashly to anticipate your advantages, or basely to fly off upon every disadvantage."

(2.) He must assure them of the presence of God with them, to own and plead their righteous cause, and not only to save them from their enemies, but to give them victory over them, *v. 4.* Note, Those have no reason to fear, that have God with them.

The giving of this encouragement by a priest, one of the Lord's ministers, intimates, [1.] That it is very fit that armies should have chaplains, not only to pray for them, but to preach to them, both to reprove that which would hinder their success, and to raise their hopes of it. [2.] That it is the work of Christ's ministers to encourage his good soldiers in their spiritual conflicts with the world and the flesh, and to assure them of a conquest, yea, more than a conquest, through Christ that loved us.

II. They that were indisposed to fight, must be discharged; whether the indisposition did arise,

1. From the circumstances of a man's outward condition. As, (1.) If he had lately built or purchased a new house, and had not taken possession of it, had not dedicated it, (*v. 5.*) that is, made a solemn festival for the entertainment of his friends, that came to him to welcome him to his house; let him go home and take the comfort of that which God has blessed him with, till, by enjoying it for some time, he becomes less fond of it, and consequently less disturbed in the war by the thoughts of it, and more willing to die, and leave it. For that is the nature of all our worldly enjoyments, that they please us best at first; after a while we

see the vanity of them. Some think that this dedication of their houses was a religious act, and that they took possession of them with prayers and praises, with a solemn devoting of themselves and all their enjoyments to the service and honour of God; David penned the 30th Psalm, on such an occasion, as appears by the title. Note, He that has a house of his own, should dedicate it to God, by setting up and keeping up the fear and worship of God in it, that he may have a church in his house; and nothing should be suffered to divert a man from this. Or, (2.) If a man had been at a great expense to *plant a vineyard*, and longed to *eat of the fruit of it*, which, for the first three years, he was forbidden to do, by that law, (*Lev. 19, 23, &c.*) let him go home, if he has a mind, and gratify his own humour with the fruits of it, *v. 6.* See how indulgent God is to his people in innocent things, and how far from being a hard Master. Since we naturally covet to eat the labour of our hands, rather than an Israelite should be crossed therein, his service in war shall be dispensed with. Or, (3.) If a man had made up his mind to be married, and the marriage were not solemnized, he was at liberty to return, (*v. 7.*) as also to tarry at home for one year after marriage, (*ch. 24. 5.*) for the terrors of war would be disagreeable to a man who had just welcomed the soft scene of domestic attachment. And God would not be served in his wars by pressed men that were forced into the army against their will, but they must all be perfectly volunteers, (*Ps. 110. 3.*) *Thy people shall be willing.* In running the christian race, and fighting the good fight of faith, we must *lay aside every weight*, and all that which would clog and divert our minds, and make us unwilling. The Jewish writers agree that this liberty to return was allowed only in those wars which they made voluntarily, (as Bishop Patrick expresses it,) not those which were made by the divine command against Amalek and the Canaanites, in which every man was bound to fight.

2. If a man's indisposition to fight arose from the weakness and timidity of his own spirit, he had leave to return from the war, *v. 8.* This proclamation Gideon made to his army, and it detached above two thirds of them, *Judg. 7. 3.* Some make the fearfulness and faintheartedness, here supposed, to arise from the terrors of an evil conscience, which would make a man afraid to look death and danger in the face. It was then thought that men of loose and profligate lives would not be good soldiers, but must needs be both cowards in the army, and curses to it, the shame and trouble of the camp; and therefore those who were conscious to themselves of notorious guilt, were shaken off. But it seems rather to be meant of a natural fearfulness. It was partly in kindness to them, that they had their discharge; (though shamed, they were eased;) but much more in kindness to the rest of the army, who were hereby freed from the incumbrance of such as were useless and unserviceable, while the danger of infection from their cowardice and flight was prevented; that is the reason here given, *Lest his brethren's heart fail as well as his heart.* Fear is catching, and in an army is of most pernicious consequence. We must take heed that we *fear not the fear of them that are afraid*, Isa. 8. 12.

Lastly, It is here ordered, that when all the cowards were dismissed, then captains should be nominated, (*v. 9.*) for it was in a special manner necessary, that the leaders and commanders should be men of courage. That reform therefore must be made, when the army was first mustered and marshalled. The soldiers of Christ have need of courage, that they may acquit themselves like men,



and endure hardness like good soldiers, especially the officers of his army.

10. When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. 11. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, *that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.* 12. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: 13. And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: 14. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, *even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.* 15. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.* 16. But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee *for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:* 17. But thou shalt utterly destroy them; *namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:* 18. That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God. 19. When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field *is man's life*) to employ them in the siege: 20. Only the trees which thou knowest that they *be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.*

They are here directed what method to take in dealing with the cities, (those only are mentioned, v. 10, but doubtless the armies in the field, and the nations they had occasion to deal with, are likewise intended,) upon which they made war. They must not make a descent upon any of their neighbours, till they had first given them fair notice, by a public manifesto, or remonstrance, stating the ground of their quarrel with them. In dealing with the worst of enemies, the laws of justice and honour must be observed; and as the sword must never be taken in hand without cause, so not without cause *shown*. War is an appeal, in which the merits of the cause must be set forth.

I. Even to the proclamation of war must be subjoined a tender of peace, if they would accept of it upon reasonable terms. That is, (say the Jewish writers,) "upon condition that they renounce idolatry,

worship the God of Israel, as proselytes of the gate that were not circumcised, pay to their new masters a yearly tribute, and submit to their government;" on these terms the process of war should be stayed, and their conquerors, upon this submission, were to be their protectors, v. 10, 11. Some think that even the seven nations of Canaan were to have this offer of peace made to them; and the offer was no jest or mockery, though *it was of the Lord to harden their hearts*, that they should not accept it, Josh. 11. 20. Others think that they are excluded, (v. 16.) not only from the benefit of that law, (v. 13.) which confines military execution to the males only, but from the benefit of this also, which allows not to make war till peace was refused. And I see not how they could proclaim peace to those who by the law were to be utterly rooted out, and to whom they were to shew no mercy, ch. 7. 2. But for any other nation which they made war upon, either for the enlarging of their coast, the avenging of any wrong done, or the recovery of any right denied, they must first proclaim peace to them. Let this show, 1. God's grace in dealing with sinners: though he might most justly and easily destroy them, yet, having no pleasure in their ruin, he proclaims peace, and beseeches them to be reconciled; so that they who lie most obnoxious to his justice, and ready to fall as sacrifices to it, if they make him an answer of peace, and open to him, upon condition that they should be tributaries and servants to him, shall not only be saved from ruin, but incorporated with his Israel, as fellow-citizens with the saints. 2. Let it show us our duty in dealing with our brethren: if any quarrel happen, let us not only be ready to hearken to the proposals of peace, but forward to make such proposals. We should never make use of the law, till we have first tried to accommodate matters in variance amicably, and without expense and vexation. *We must be for peace, whoever are for war.*

II. If the offers for peace were not accepted, then they must proceed to push on the war. And let those to whom God offers peace, know, that if they reject the offer, and take not the benefit of it within the time limited, judgment will rejoice against mercy in the execution, as much as new mercy rejoices against judgment in the reprieve. In this case here, 1. There is a promise implied, that they should be victorious. It is taken for granted, (v. 13.) that *the Lord their God would deliver it into their hands.* Note, These enterprises, which we undertake by a divine warrant, and prosecute by divine direction, we may expect to succeed in. If we take God's method, we shall have his blessing. 2. They are ordered, in honour to the public justice, to put all the *soldiers* to the sword, for them I understand by *every male*, (v. 13.) all that bore arms (as all then did, that were able). But the spoil they are allowed to take to themselves, (v. 14.) in which were reckoned the women and children. Note, A justifiable property is acquired in that which is won in lawful war; God himself owns the title, *the Lord thy God gives it thee*, and therefore he must be owned in it, Ps. 44. 3.

III. The nations of Canaan are excepted from the merciful provisions made by this law. Remnants might be left of the cities that were very far off, (v. 15.) because by them they were not in so much danger of being infected with idolatry; nor was their country so directly and immediately intended in the promise. But of the cities which were given to Israel for an inheritance, no remnants must be left of their inhabitants, (v. 16.) for it put a slight upon the promise, to admit Canaanites to share with them in the peculiar land of promise.

And for another reason they must be utterly destroyed, *v.* 17. Because since it could not be expected that they should be cured of their idolatry, if they were left with that plague-sore upon them, they would be in danger of infecting God's Israel, who were too apt to take the infection, *v.* 18. *They will teach you to do after their abominations*, to introduce their customs into the worship of the God of Israel, and by degrees to forsake him and to worship false gods; for those that dare violate the second commandment, will not long keep to the first. Strange worships open the door to strange deities.

*Lastly*, Care is here taken, that in the besieging of cities there should not be any destruction made of fruit-trees, *v.* 19, 20. In those times, when besiegers forced their way not, as now, with bombs and cannon-ball, but with battering rams, they had occasion for much timber in carrying on their sieges: now because, in the heat of war, men are not apt to consider, as they ought, the public good, it is expressly provided that fruit-trees should not be used as timber-trees. That reason, *for the tree of the field is man's*, (the world life, we supply,) all the ancient versions, the Septuagint, Targums, &c. read, *For is the tree of the field a man?* Or, *The tree of the field is not a man, that it should come against thee in the siege, or, retire from thee into the bulwark.* "Do not brutishly vent thy rage against the trees that can do thee no harm." But our translation seems most agreeable to the intent of the law; and it teaches us, 1. That God is a better Friend to man than he is to himself; and God's law, which we are apt to complain of as a heavy yoke, consults our interest and comfort, while our own appetites and passions, which we are so indulgent of, are really enemies to our welfare. The intent of many of the divine precepts is, to restrain us from destroying that which is our life and food. 2. That armies, and their commanders, are not allowed to make what desolation they please in the countries that are the seat of war. Military rage must always be checked and ruled with reason. War, though carried on with ever so much caution, is destructive enough, and should not be made more so than is absolutely necessary. Generous spirits will show themselves tender, not only of men's lives, but of their livelihoods; for though *the life is more than meat*, yet it will soon be nothing without meat. 3. The Jews understand this as a prohibition of all wilful waste upon any account whatsoever. No fruit-tree is to be destroyed, unless it be barren, and cumber the ground. "Nay," they maintain, "whoso wilfully breaks vessels, tears clothes, stops wells, pulls down buildings, or destroys meat, transgresses this law, *Thou shalt not destroy.*" Christ took care that the broken meat should be gathered up, that nothing might be lost. Every creature of God is good, and as nothing is to be refused, so nothing is to be abused. We may live to want what we carelessly waste.

### CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter provision is made, I. For the putting away of the guilt of blood from the land, when he that shed it, was fled from justice, *v.* 1-9. II. For the preserving of the honour of a captive-maid, *v.* 10-14. III. For the securing of the right of a first-born son, though he were not a favourite, *v.* 15-17. IV. For the restraining and punishing of a rebellious son, *v.* 18-21. V. For the maintaining of the honour of human bodies, which must not be hanged in chains, but decently buried, even the bodies of the worst malefactors, *v.* 22, 23.

1. **I**F *one* be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him; 2. Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they

shall measure unto the cities which *are* round about him that is slain: 3. And it shall be, *that* the city *which* is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city, shall take a heifer which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; 4. And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: 5. And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near, (for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD,) and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be *tried*. 6. And all the elders of that city, *that are* next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: 7. And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. 8. Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed; and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. 9. So shalt thou put away the *guilt* of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do *that which* is right in the sight of the LORD.

Care had been taken by some preceding laws for the vigorous and effectual prosecution of a wilful murderer, (*ch.* 19. 11, &c.) the putting of whom to death was the putting away of the guilt of blood from the land; but if that could not be done, the murderer not being discovered, they must not think that the land was in no danger of contracting any pollution, because it was not through any neglect of their's that the murderer was unpunished; no, a great solemnity is here provided for the putting away of the guilt, as an expression of their dread and detestation of that sin.

I. The case supposed is, that *one is found slain*, and *it is not known who slew him*, *v.* 1. The providence of God has sometimes wonderfully brought to light these hidden works of darkness, and by strange occurrences the sin of the guilty has found them out: inasmuch that it is become a proverb, *Murder will out*; but it is not always so; now and then the Devil's promises of secrecy and impunity in this world are made good; yet it is but for awhile: there is a time coming, when secret murders will be discovered; *the earth shall disclose her blood*, (*Isa.* 26. 21.) upon the inquisition which justice makes for it; and an eternity coming, when they that escaped punishment from men, will lie under the righteous judgment of God. And the impunity with which so many murders and other wickednesses are committed in this world, makes it necessary that there should be a day of judgment, to *require that which is past*, *Eccl.* 3. 15.

II. Directions are given concerning what is to be done in this case. It is taken for granted that a diligent search has been made for the murderer, witnesses examined, and circumstances strictly inquired into, that if possible they might find out the guilty person; but if, after all, they could not trace it out, nor fasten the charge upon any, then,

1. The elders of the next city (that had a court

of three and twenty in it) were to concern themselves about this matter. If it were doubtful which city was next, the great Sanhedrim were to send commissioners to determine that matter, by an exact measure *v.* 2, 3. Note, Public persons must be solicitous about the public good: and those that are in power and reputation in cities, must lay out themselves to redress grievances, and reform what is amiss in the country and neighbourhood that lie about them. Those that are next to them, should have the largest share of their good influence, as ministers of God for good.

2. The priests and Levites must assist and preside in this solemnity, (*v.* 5.) that they might direct the management of it in all points according to the law, and particularly might be the people's mouth to God in the prayer that was to be put up on this sad occasion, *v.* 8. God being Israel's King, his ministers must be their magistrates, and by their word, as the mouth of the court, and learned in the laws, every controversy must be tried. It was their privilege that they had such guides, overseers, and rulers, and their duty to make use of them upon all occasions, especially in sacred things, as this was.

3. They were to bring a heifer down into a rough and unoccupied valley, and to kill it there, *v.* 3, 4. This was not a sacrifice, (for it was not brought to the altar,) but a protestation, that thus they would put the murderer to death, if they had him in their hands. The heifer must be one that had not drawn in the yoke, to signify (say some) that the murderer was a son of Belial; it must be brought into a rough valley, to signify the horror of the fact, and that the defilement which blood brings upon a land, turns it into barrenness. And the Jews say, that unless, after this, the murderer was found out, this valley where the heifer was killed, was never to be tilled or sown.

4. The elders were to wash their hands in water over the heifer that was killed, and to profess, not only that they had not shed this innocent blood themselves, but that they knew not who had, (*v.* 6, 7.) nor had knowingly conceded the murderer, helped him to make his escape, or had been any way aiding or abetting. To this custom David alludes, Ps. 20. 6, *I will wash my hands in innocency*; but if Pilate had any eye to it, (Matth. 27. 24.) he wretchedly misapplied it, when he condemned Christ, knowing him to be innocent, and yet acquitted himself from the guilt of innocent blood. *Protestatio non valet contra factum*—*Protestations are of no avail when contradicted by fact.*

5. The priests were to pray to God for the country and nation, that God would be merciful to them, and not bring upon them the judgments which the connivance at the sin of murder would deserve, *v.* 8. It might be presumed that the murderer was either one of their city, or was now harboured in their city; and therefore they must pray that they might not fare the worse for his being among them, Numb. 16. 22. *Be merciful, O Lord, to thy people Israel.* Note, When we hear of the wickedness of the wicked, we have need to cry earnestly to God for mercy for our land, which groans and trembles under it. We must empty the measure of our prayers, which others are filling by their sins.

Now this solemnity was appointed, (1.) That it might give occasion to common and public discourse concerning the murder, which perhaps might some way or other occasion the discovery of it. (2.) That it might possess people with a dread of the guilt of blood, which defiles not only the conscience of him that sheds it, (this should engage us all to pray with David, *Deliver me from blood guiltiness*;) but the land in which it is shed. It cries to the magistrate

for justice on the criminal; and if that cry be not heard, it cries to heaven for judgment on the land. If there must be so much care employed to save the land from guilt, when the murderer was not known, it was certainly impossible to secure it from guilt, if the murderer was known and yet protected. All would be taught, by this solemnity, to use their utmost care and diligence to prevent, discover, and punish, murder. Even the heathen mariners dreaded the guilt of blood, Jon. 1. 14. (3.) That we might all learn to take heed of partaking in other men's sins, and making ourselves accessory to them *ex post facto*—*after the fact*, by countenancing the sin or sinner, and not witnessing against it in our places. We have *fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, if we do not reprove them rather, and bear our testimony against them; the repentance of the church of Corinth for the sin of one of their members, produced such a carefulness, such a clearing of themselves, such a holy indignation, fear and revenge, (2 Cor. 7. 11.) as were signified by the solemnity here appointed.

10. When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, 11. And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; 12. Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; 13. And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife 14. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

By this law a soldier is allowed to marry his captive, if he pleased. For the hardness of their hearts, Moses gave them this permission, lest, if they had not liberty given them to marry such, they should have taken liberty to defile themselves with them, and by such wickedness the camp would have been troubled. The man is supposed to have a wife already, and to take this wife for a secondary wife, as the Jews called them. This indulgence of men's inordinate desires, in which their hearts walked after their eyes, is by no means agreeable to the law of Christ, which therefore in this respect, among others, far exceeds in glory the law of Moses. The gospel permits not him that has one wife, to take another, for from the beginning it was not so: the gospel forbids looking upon a woman, though a beautiful one, to lust after her, and commands the mortifying and denying of all irregular desires, though it be as uneasy as the cutting off of a right hand; so much does our holy religion, more than that of the Jews, advance the honour, and support the dominion, of the soul over the body, the spirit over the flesh, consonant to the glorious discovery it makes of life and immortality, and the better hope.

But though military men were allowed this liberty, yet care is here taken that they should not abuse it; that is,

I. That they should not abuse themselves by doing it too hastily, though the captive was ever so desirable. "*If thou wouldest have her to thy wife, (v. 10, 11.) it is true, thou needest not ask her parents' consent, for she is thy captive, and is at thy disposal. But, 1. Thou shalt have no familiar intercourse, till thou hast married her.*" This allowance was designed to gratify, not a filthy brutish lust, in the heat and fury of its rebellion against reason and virtue, but an honourable and generous affection to a comely and amiable person, though in distress; therefore he may make her his wife if he will, but he must not *deal with her as with a harlot*. 2. "*Thou shalt not marry her of a sudden, but keep her a full month in thy house,*" v. 12, 13. This he must do, either, (1.) That he may try to take his affection off from her; for he must know, that, though in marrying her he does not do ill, (s. the law then stood,) yet, in letting her alone, he does much better. Let her therefore shave her head, that he might not be enamoured with her locks, and *let her nails grow*, (so the margin reads it,) to spoil the beauty of her hand. *Quicquid amas cupias non placuisse nimis—We should moderate our affection for those things which we are tempted to love inordinately.* Or rather, (2.) This was done in token of her renouncing idolatry, and becoming a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The shaving of her head, the paring of her nails, and the changing of her apparel, signified her putting off her former conversation, which was corrupt in her ignorance, that she might become a new creature. She must remain in his house to be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and worship of him: the Jews say that if she refused and continued obstinate in idolatry, he must not marry her. Note, The professors of religion must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, 2 Cor. 6. 14.

II. It is likewise provided that they should not abuse the poor captive. 1. She must have time to *bewail her father and mother*, from whom she was separated, and without whose consent and blessing she is now likely to be married, and perhaps to a common soldier of Israel, though in her country ever so nobly born and bred. To force a marriage till these sorrows were digested, and in some measure got over, and she was better reconciled to the land of her captivity, by being better acquainted with it, would be very unkind. She must not bewail her idols, but be glad to part with them; to her near and dear relations only her affection must be thus indulged. 2. If, upon second thoughts, he that had brought her to his house with a purpose to marry her, changed his mind and would not marry her, he might not make merchandise of her, as of his other prisoners, but must give her liberty to return, if she pleased, to her own country, because he had humbled her, and afflicted her, by raising expectations, and then disappointing them; (v. 14.) having made a fool of her, he might not make a prey of her. This intimates how binding the laws of justice and honour are, particularly in the pretensions of love, the courting of affections, and the promises of marriage, which are to be looked upon as solemn things that have something sacred in them, and therefore are not to be jested with.

15. If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have borne him children, *both* the beloved and the hated; and *if* the first-born son be hers that was hated: 16. Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit *that* which he hath, *that* he may not make the son of the beloved first-born before the son

of the hated, *which is indeed* the first-born. 17. But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the first-born is his.

This law restrains men from disinheriting their eldest sons, out of mere caprice, and without just provocation.

1. The case here put, (v. 15.) is very instructive. (1.) It shows the great mischief of having more wives than one, which the law of Moses did not restrain, probably, in hopes that men's own experience of the great inconvenience of it in families, would at last put an end to it, and make them a law to themselves. Observe the supposition here, *If a man have two wives*, it is a thousand to one but one of them is beloved and the other hated, that is, manifestly loved less, : s Leah was by Jacob, and the effect of this cannot but be strifes and jealousies, envy, confusion, and every evil work, which could not but create a constant uneasiness and vexation to the husband, and involve him both in sin and trouble. Those do much better consult their own ease and satisfaction, who adhere to God's law, than those who indulge their own lusts. (2.) It shows how Providence commonly sides with the weakest, and *gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked; for the first-born son* is here supposed to be *her's that was hated*, it was so in Jacob's family, because *the Lord saw that Leah was hated*, Gen. 29. 31. The great Householder wisely gives to each his dividend of comfort; if one had the honour to be the beloved wife, it often proved that the other had the honour to be the mother of the first-born.

2. The law in this case is still binding to parents; they must give their children their right without partiality. In the case supposed, the eldest son, though the son of the less beloved wife, must have his birth-right privilege, which was a double portion of the father's estate, because he was the beginning of his strength, that is, in him his family began to be strengthened, and his quiver began to be filled with the *arrows of a mighty man*, (Ps. 127. 4.) and therefore the *right of the first-born is his*, v. 16, 17. Jacob had indeed deprived Reuben of his birth-right, and given it to Joseph, but it was because Reuben had forfeited the birth-right by his incest, not because he was the *son of the hated*; now lest that which Jacob did justly, should be drawn into a precedent, for others to do the same thing unjustly, it is here provided that when the father makes his will, or otherwise settles his estate, the child shall not fare the worse for the mother's unhappiness in having less of her husband's love, for that was not the child's fault. Note, (1.) Parents ought to make no other difference in dispensing their affections among their children, than what they see plainly God makes in dispensing his grace among them. (2.) Since it is the providence of God that makes heirs, the disposal of providence in that matter must be acquiesced in, and not opposed. No son should be abandoned by his father, till he manifestly appear to be abandoned of God, which is hard to say of any while there is life.

18. If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; 19. Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him

and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: 20. And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; *he is a glutton, and a drunkard.* 21. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you: and all Israel shall hear, and fear. 22. And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; 23. His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Here is,

I. A law for the punishing of a rebellious son. Having in the former law provided that parents should not deprive their children of their right, it was fit that it should next be provided that children withdraw not the honour and duty which are owing to their parents, for there is no partiality in the divine law.

Observe, 1. How the criminal is here described. He is a *stubborn and rebellious son*, v. 18. No child was to fare the worse for the weakness of his capacity, the slowness or dullness of his understanding, but for his wilfulness and obstinacy. If he carry himself proudly and insolently toward his parents, contemn their authority, slight their reproofs and admonitions, disobey the express commands they give him for his own good, hate to be reformed by the correction they give him, shame their family, grieve their hearts, waste their substance, and threaten to ruin their estate by riotous living; this is a *stubborn and rebellious son*. He is particularly supposed (v. 20.) to be a *glutton or a drunkard*. This intimates either, (1.) That these were sins which his parents did in a particular manner warn him against, and therefore that in these instances there was a plain evidence that he did not obey their voice. Lemuel had this charge from his mother, Prov. 31. 4. Note, In the education of children, great care should be taken to suppress all inclinations to drunkenness, and to keep them out of the way of temptations to it; in order hereunto they should be possessed betimes with a dread and detestation of that beastly sin, and taught betimes to deny themselves. Or, (2.) That his being a *glutton and a drunkard* was the cause of his insolence and obstinacy toward his parents. Note, There is nothing that draws men into all manner of wickedness, and hardens them in it, more certainly and fatally, than drunkenness does. When men take to drink, they forget the law, (Prov. 31. 5.) even that fundamental law of honouring parents.

2. How this criminal is to be proceeded against. His own father and mother are to be his prosecutors, v. 19, 20. They might not put him to death themselves, but they must complain of him to the elders of the city, and the complaint must needs be made with a sad heart, *This our son is stubborn and rebellious*. Note, Those that give up themselves to vice and wickedness, and will not be reclaimed, forfeit their interest in the natural affections of their nearest relations; the instruments of their being justly become the instruments of their destruction.

The children that forget their duty must think themselves and not blame their parents, if they are regarded with less and less affection. And how difficult soever tender parents now find it to reconcile themselves to the just punishment of their rebellious children, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, all natural affection will be so entirely swallowed up in divine love, that they will acquiesce even in the condemnation of those children, because God will be therein for ever glorified.

3. What judgment is to be executed upon him; he must be publicly *stoned to death by the men of his city*, v. 21. And thus, (1.) The paternal authority was supported, and God, our common Father, showed himself jealous for it, it being one of the first and most ancient streams derived from him that is the Fountain of all power. (2.) This law, if duly executed, would *early destroy the wicked of the land*, (Ps. 101. 8.) and prevent the spreading of the gangrene, by cutting off the corrupt part betimes; for those that were bad members of families, would never make good members of the commonwealth. (3.) It would strike an awe upon children, and frighten them into obedience to their parents, if they would not otherwise be brought to their duty, and kept in it. *All Israel shall hear*. The Jews say, "The elders that condemned him, were to send notice of it in writing all the nation over, *In such a court, such a day, we stoned such a one, because he was a stubborn and rebellious son.*" And I have sometimes wished, that as in all our courts there is an exact record kept of the condemnation of criminals in *perpetuum rei memoriam*—that the memorial may never be lost, so there might be public and authentic notice given in print to the kingdom, of such condemnations, and the executions upon them, by the elders themselves, *in terrorem*—that all may hear and fear.

II. A law for the burying of the bodies of malefactors that were hanged, v. 22. The hanging of them by the neck till the body was dead, was not used at all among the Jews, as with us; but of such as were stoned to death, if it were for blasphemy; or some other very execrable crime, it was usual, by order of the judges, to hang up the dead bodies upon a post, for some time, as a spectacle to the world, to express the ignominy of the crime, and to strike the greater terror upon others, that they might not only hear and fear, but see and fear. Now it is here provided that whatever time of the day they were thus hung up, at sun-set they should be taken down and buried, and not left to hang out all night; sufficient (says the law) *to such a man is this punishment*; hitherto let it go, but no further. Let the malefactor and his crime be hid in the grave.

Now, 1. God would thus preserve the honour of human bodies and tenderness towards the worst of criminals. The time of exposing dead bodies thus, is limited, for the same reason that the number of stripes was limited by another law, *lest thy brother seem vile unto thee*. Punishing beyond death God reserves to himself; as for man, there is no more that he can do. Whether therefore the hanging of malefactors in chains, and setting up their heads and quarters, be decent among christians that look for the resurrection of the body, may perhaps be worth considering. 2. Yet it is plain there was something ceremonial in it; by the law of Moses, the touch of a dead body was defiling, and therefore dead bodies must not be left hanging up in the country, because, by the same rule, that would defile the land. But, 3. There is one reason here given which has reference to Christ. *He that is hanged, is accursed of God*, that is, it is the highest degree of disgrace and reproach that can

be done to a man, and proclaims him under the curse of God as much as any external punishment can. They that see him thus hang between heaven and earth, will conclude him abandoned of both, and unworthy of either; and therefore let him not hang all night, for that will carry it too far. Now the apostle showing how Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being himself made a curse for us, illustrates it by comparing this brand here put on him that was hanged on a tree, with the death of Christ, Gal. 3. 13. Moses, by the Spirit, uses this phrase of being *accursed of God*, when he means no more than being treated most ignominiously, that it might afterward be applied to the death of Christ, and might show that in it he underwent the curse of the law for us, which is a great enhancement of his love, and a great encouragement to our faith in him. And (as the excellent Bishop Patrick well observes) this passage is applied to the death of Christ, not only because he bare our sins and was exposed to shame, as these malefactors were that were accursed of God, but because he was in the evening taken down from the accursed tree and buried, (and that by the particular care of the Jews, with an eye to this law, John 19. 31.) in token that now, the guilt being removed, the law was satisfied, as it was when the malefactor had hanged till sun-set; it demanded no more. Then he ceased to be a curse, and those that are his. And as the land of Israel was pure and clean, when the dead body was buried, so the church is washed and cleansed by the complete satisfaction which thus Christ made.

### CHAP. XXII.

The laws of this chapter provide, I. For the preservation of charity and good neighbourhood, in the care of strayed or fallen cattle, v. 1.-4. II. For the preservation of order and distinction; that men and women should not wear one another's clothes, (v. 5.) and that other needless mixtures should be avoided, v. 9.-11. III. For the preservation of birds, v. 6, 7. IV. Of life, v. 8. V. Of the commandments, v. 12. VI. Of the reputation of a wife abused, if she were innocent, (v. 13.-19.) but for her punishment, if guilty, v. 20, 21. VII. For the preservation of the chastity of wives, v. 22. Virgins betrothed, (v. 23.-27.) or not betrothed, v. 28, 29. And lastly, against incest, v. 30.

I. **THOU** shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. 2. And if thy brother *be* not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. 3. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself. 4. Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift *them* up again.

The kindness that was commanded to be shown in reference to an enemy, (Exod. 23. 4, &c.) is here required to be much more done for a neighbour, though he were not an Israelite, for the law is consonant to natural equity.

1. That strayed cattle should be brought back, either to the owner, or to the pasture out of which

they had gone astray, v. 1, 2. This must be done, in pity to the very cattle, which, while they wandered, were exposed; and in civility and respect to the owner, nay, and in justice to him, for it was doing as we would be done by, which is one of the fundamental laws of equity. Note, Religion teaches us to be neighbourly, and to be ready to do all good offices, as we have opportunity, to all men. In doing this, (1.) They must not mind trouble; but if they knew not who the owner was, must bring it back themselves; for if they should only send notice to the owner to come and look after it himself, some mischief might befall it ere he could reach it. (2.) They must not mind expense: but if they knew not who the owner was, they must take it home, and feed it till the owner was found. If such care must be taken of a neighbour's ox or ass going astray, much more of himself going astray from God and his duty; we should do our utmost to convert him (Jam. 5. 19.) and restore him, considering ourselves, Gal. 6. 1.

2. That lost goods should be brought to the owner, v. 3. The Jews say, "He that found the lost goods, was to give public notice of them by the common crier three or four times," according to the usage with us; if the owner could not be found, he that found the goods might convert them to his own use; but (say some learned writers in this case) he would do very well to give the value of the goods to the poor.

3. That cattle in distress should be helped, v. 4. This must be done, both in compassion to the brute-creatures, for a *merciful man regardeth the life of a beast*, though it be not his own, and in love and friendship to our neighbour, not knowing how soon we may have occasion for his help. If one member may say to another, "I have at present no need of thee," it cannot say, "I never shall."

5. The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God. 6. If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, *whether they be* young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: 7. *But* thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and *that* thou mayest prolong *thy* days. 8. When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence. 9. Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds; lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. 10. Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. 11. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, *as* of woollen and linen together. 12. Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, where-with thou coverest *thyself*.

Here are several laws in these verses, which seem to stoop very low, and to take cognizance of things mean and minute; men's laws commonly do not so; *De minimis non curat lex*—*The law takes no cognizance of little things*; but because



God's providence extends itself to the smallest affairs, his precepts do so, that even in them we may be in the *fear of the Lord*, as we are under his eye and care. And yet the significancy and tendency of these statutes, which seem little, are such, that, notwithstanding their minuteness, being found among the things of God's law, which he has written to us, they are to be accounted great things.

I. The distinction of sexes by the apparel is to be kept up, for the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, *v. 5. Nature itself teaches* that a difference be made between them in *their hair*, (1 Cor. 11. 14.) and by the same rule in their clothes, which therefore ought not to be confounded, either in ordinary wear, or occasionally. To befriend a lawful escape or concealment, it may be done; but whether for sport, or in the acting of plays, is justly questionable. Some think it refers to the idolatrous custom of the Gentiles: in the worship of Venus, women appeared in armour, and men in women's clothes; this, as other such superstitious usages, is here said to be *an abomination to the Lord*. 2. It forbids the confounding of the dispositions and affairs of the sexes: men must not be effeminate, nor do the women's work in the house, nor must women be viragos, pretend to *teach*, or *usurp authority*, 1 Tim. 2. 11, 12. 3. Probably, this confounding of garments had been used to gain opportunity of committing uncleanness, and is therefore kept forbidden; for those that would be kept from sin, must keep themselves from all occasions of it and approaches to it.

II. In taking a bird's nest, the dam must be let go, *v. 6, 7*. The Jews say, "This is the least of all the commandments of the law of Moses, and yet the same promise is here made to the observance of it, that is made to the keeping of the fifth commandment, which is one of the greatest, *that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days*; for as disobedience in a small matter shows a very great contempt of the law, so obedience in a small matter shows a very great regard to it. He that let go a bird out of his hand, (which was worth two in the bush,) purely because God bid him, in that made it to appear that he *esteemed all God's precepts concerning all things to be right*, and that he could deny himself rather than sin against God. But *doth God take care for birds*? 1 Cor. 9. 9. Yes, certainly; and perhaps to this law our Saviour alludes, Luke 12. 6, *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings; and not one of them is forgotten before God*? This law, 1. Forbids us to be cruel to the brute creatures, or to take a pleasure in destroying them. Though God has made us *wiser than the fowls of heaven*, and given us *dominion over them*, yet we must not abuse them, nor rule them with rigour. *Let go the dam to breed again; destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*, Isa. 65. 8. 2. It teaches us compassion to those of our own kind, and to abhor the thought of every thing that looks barbarous and cruel, and ill-natured, especially toward those of the weaker and tender sex, which always ought to be treated with the utmost respect, in consideration of the sorrows wherein they bring forth children. It is spoken of as an instance of the most inhuman cruelty, that *the mother was dashed to pieces upon her children*, (Hos. 10. 14.) and that the *women with child were rift up*, Amos 1. 13. 3. It further intimates, that we must not take advantage against any, from their natural affection, and the tenderness of their disposition, to do them an injury. The dam could not have been taken, if her concern for her eggs or young (unlike to the ostrich) had not detained her upon the nest, when otherwise she could easily have secured herself by flight. Now, since it is a thousand pities that

she should fare the worse for that which is her praise, the law takes care that she shall be let go. The remembrance of this may, perhaps, some time or other, keep us from doing a hard or unkind thing to those whom we have at our mercy.

III. In building a house, care must be taken to make it safe, that none might receive mischief by falling from it, *v. 8*. The roofs of their houses were flat for people to walk on, as appears by many scriptures; now, lest any, through carelessness, should fall off them, they must compass them with battlements, which (the Jews say) must be three feet and a half high; if this were not done, and mischief followed, the owner, by his neglect, brought the guilt of blood upon his house. See here, 1. How precious men's lives are to God, who protects them, not only by his providence, but by his law. 2. How precious, therefore, they ought to be to us, and what care we should take to prevent hurt coming to any person. The Jews say, that by the equity of this law they are obliged (and so are we too) to fence, or remove every thing by which life may be endangered, as to cover draw-wells, keep bridges in repair, and the like; lest if any perish through our omission, their blood be required at our hand.

IV. Odd mixtures are here forbidden, *v. 9, 10*. Much of this we met with before, Lev. 19. 19. There appears not any thing at all of moral evil in these things, and therefore we now make no conscience of sowing wheat and rye together, ploughing with horses and oxen together, and of wearing linsey-woolsey garments; but hereby is forbidden either, 1. A conformity to some idolatrous customs of the heathen; or, 2. That which is contrary to the plainness and purity of an Israelite. They must not gratify their own vanity and curiosity by putting those things together, which the creator in infinite wisdom had made asunder; they must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; nor mingle themselves with the unclean, as an ox with an ass. Nor must their profession and appearance in the world be motley, or parti-coloured, but all of a piece, all of a kind.

V. The law concerning fringes upon their garments, and memorandums of the commandments, which we had before, (Numb. 15. 38, 39.) is here repeated, *v. 12*. By these they were distinguished from other people, so that it might be said, upon the first sight, There goes an Israelite; which taught them not to be ashamed of their country, or the peculiarities of their religion, how much soever their neighbours looked upon them and it with contempt: and they were also put in mind of the precepts, upon the particular occasions to which they had reference; and perhaps the law is repeated here, because the precepts immediately foregoing seemed so minute, that they were in danger of being overlooked and forgotten. The fringes will remind you not to make your garments of linen and woollen, *v. 11*.

13. If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14. And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and, when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15. Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth *the tokens of the damsel's virginity* unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16. And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17. And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech *against her*, say-

ing, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these *are the tokens of* my daughter's virginity: And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18. And the elders of that city shall take that man, and chastise him; 19. And they shall amerce him in a hundred *shekels* of silver, and give *them* unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20. But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of* virginity be not found for the damsel: 21. Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die; because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. 22. If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23. If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24. Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. 25. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her; then the man only that lay with her shall die: 26. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; *there is* in the damsel no sin *worthy* of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so *is* this matter: 27. For he found her in the field, *and* the betrothed damsel cried, and *there was* none to save her. 28. If a man find a damsel *that is* a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29. Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife: because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. 30. A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

These laws relate to the seventh commandment, laying a restraint, by laying a penalty, upon those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

I. If a man, lusting after another woman, to get rid of his wife, slander her and falsely accuse her, as not having the virginity she pretended to when he married her, upon the disproof of his slander, he must be punished, v. 13. . 19. What the meaning of that evidence is, by which the husband's accusation was to be proved false, the learned are not

agreed, nor is it all necessary to inquire—they for whom this law was intended, no doubt, understood it: it is sufficient for us to know that this wicked husband, who had thus endeavoured to ruin the reputation of his own wife, was to be scourged, and fined, and bound up from ever divorcing the wife he had thus abused, v. 18, 19. Upon this dislike of her, he might have divorced her, if he had pleased, by the permission of the law, (*ch.* 24. 1.) but then he must have given her her dowry; if therefore, to save that, and to do her the greater mischief, he would thus destroy her good name, it was fit that he should be severely punished for it, and for ever after forfeit the permission to divorce her. Observe, 1. The nearer any are in relation to us, the greater sin it is to belie them, and blemish their reputation. It is spoken of as a crime of the highest nature to *slander their own mother's son*, (Ps. 50. 20.) who is next to thyself, much more to slander thine own wife, or thine own husband, that is thyself: it is an ill bird indeed, that defiles its own nest. 2. Chastity is honour as well as virtue, and that which gives occasion for the suspicion of it, is as great a reproach and disgrace as any other whatsoever: in this matter, therefore, above any thing, we should be highly tender, both of our own good name and that of others. 3. Parents must look upon themselves as concerned to vindicate the reputation of their children, for it is a branch of their own.

II. If the woman that was married as a virgin, were not found to be one, she was to be stoned to death at her father's door, v. 20, 21. If the uncleanness had been committed before she was betrothed, it would not have been punished as a capital crime; but she must die for the abuse she put upon him whom she married, being conscious to herself of her being defiled, while she made him believe her to be a chaste and modest woman. But some think that her uncleanness was punished with death, only in case it was committed after she was betrothed, supposing there were few come to maturity but what were betrothed, though not yet married. Now, 1. This gave a powerful caution to young women to flee fornication, since, however concealed before, so as not to mar their marriage, it would, very likely, be discovered after, to their perpetual infamy and utter ruin. 2. It is intimated to parents, that they must by all means possible preserve their children's chastity, by giving them good advice and admonition, setting them good examples, keeping them from bad company, praying for them, and laying them under needful restraints; because, if the children committed lewdness, the parents must have the grief and shame of the execution at their own door. That phrase of *folly wrought in Israel*, was used concerning this very crime in the case of Dinah, Gen. 34. 7. All sin is folly, uncleanness especially; but above all, uncleanness in Israel, by profession a holy people.

III. If any man, single or married, lay with a married woman, they were both to be put to death, v. 22. This law we had before, Lev. 20. 10. For a married man to lie with a single woman, was not a crime of so high a nature, nor was it punished with death, because not introducing a spurious brood into families, under the character of legitimate children.

IV. If a damsel were betrothed and not married, she was from under the eye of her intended husband, and therefore she and her chastity were taken under the special protection of the law. 1. If her chastity were violated by her own consent, she was to be put to death, and her adulterer with her, v. 23, 24. And it shall be presumed, that she consented, if it were done in the city, or in any place where, had

she cried out, help might speedily have come in to prevent the injury offered her. *Qui tacet, consentire videtur—Silence implies consent.* Note, It may be presumed that those willingly yield to a temptation, (whatever they pretend,) who will not use the means and helps they might be furnished with to avoid and overcome it. Nay, her being found in the city, a place of company and diversion, when she should have kept under the protection of her father's house, was an evidence against her, that she had not that dread of the sin, and the danger of it, which became a modest woman. Note, They that needlessly expose themselves to temptation, justly suffer for the same, if, ere they are aware, they be surprised and caught by it. Dinah lost her honour, to gratify her curiosity with a sight of the daughters of the land. By this law the Virgin Mary was in danger of being made a public example, that is, of being stoned to death, but that God, by an angel, cleared the matter to Joseph. 2. If she were forced, and never consented, he that committed the rape was to be put to death, but the damsel was to be acquitted, v. 25..27. Now if it were done in the field, out of the hearing of neighbours, it shall be presumed that she cried out, but there was none to save her; and besides, her going into the field, a place of solitude, did not so much expose her. Now by this law it is intimated to us, (1.) That we shall suffer only for the wickedness we do, not for that which is done unto us. That is no sin, which has not more or less of the will in it. (2.) That we must presume the best concerning all persons, unless the contrary do appear; not only charity, but equity, teaches us to do so. Though none heard her cry, yet because none could hear it if she did, it shall be taken for granted that she did. This rule we should go by in judging of persons and actions, *believe all things, and hope all things.* (3.) That our chastity should be as dear to us as our life; when that is assaulted, it is not at all improper to cry, *Murder, Murder!* for, *as when a man riseth against his neighbour and slayeth him, even so is this matter.* (4.) By way of allusion to this, see what we are here to do when Satan sets upon us with his temptations; wherever we are, let us cry aloud to heaven for help, (*Succurre, Domine, vim patior—Help me, O Lord, for I suffer violence,*) and there we may be sure to be heard, and answered, as Paul was, *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

V. If a damsel not betrothed be thus abused by violence, he that abused her, should be fined, the father should have the fine, and if he and the damsel did consent, he should be bound to marry her, and never to divorce her, how much soever she was below him, and how displeasing soever she might afterward be to him, as Tamar was to Amnon, after he had forced her, v. 28, 29. This was to deter men from such vicious practices, which it is a shame that we are necessitated to read and write of.

VI. The law against a man's marrying his father's widow, or having any undue familiarity with his father's wife, is here repeated, (v. 30.) from Lev. 18. 8. And, probably, it is intended (as Bishop Patrick notes) for a short memorandum to them carefully to observe all the laws there made against incestuous marriages, this being specified, which is the most detestable of all; it is that of which the apostle says, *It is not so much as named among the Gentiles,* 1 Cor. 5. 1.

### CHAP. XXIII.

The laws of this chapter provide, I. For the preserving of the purity and honour of the families of Israel, by excluding such as would be a disgrace to them, v. 1..8. II. For the preserving of the purity and honour of the camp of Israel when it was abroad, v. 9..14. III. For the encouraging and entertaining of proselytes, v. 15, 16. IV. Against whoredom, v. 17, 18. V. Against usury, v. 19, 20. VI. Against the breach of vows, v. 21..23. VII.

What liberty a man might take in his neighbour's field and vineyard, and what not, v. 24, 25.

1. **H**E that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD. 2. A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. 3. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: 4. Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor, of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. 5. Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. 6. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever. 7. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land. 8. The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.

Interpreters are not agreed what is here meant by *entering into the congregation of the Lord*, which is here forbidden to eunuchs and to bastards, Ammonites and Moabites, for ever, but to Edonites and Egyptians, only till the third generation. 1. Some think they are hereby excluded from communicating with the people of God in their religious services; though eunuchs and bastards were owned as members of the church, and the Ammonites and Moabites might be circumcised and proselyted to the Jewish religion, yet they, and their families, must lie for some time under marks of disgrace, remembering the rock where they were hewn, and must not come so near the sanctuary as others might, nor have so free a communion with Israelites. 2. Others think they are hereby excluded from bearing office in the congregation: none of these must be elders or judges, lest the honour of the magistracy, should thereby be stained. 3. Others think they are excluded only from marrying with Israelites. Thus the learned Bishop Patrick inclines to understand it; yet we find that when this law was put in execution after the captivity, they separated from Israel, not only the strange wives, but all the mixed multitude, see Neh. 13. 1..3. With the daughters of these nations, (though out of the nations of Canaan,) it should seem, the men of Israel might marry, if they were completely proselyted to the Jewish religion; but with the men of these nations the daughters of Israel might not marry, nor could the men be naturalized, except as here excepted.

It is plain, in general, that disgrace is here put,

(1.) Upon bastards and eunuchs, v. 1, 2. By bastards here, the Jewish writers understand, not all that were born of fornication, or out of marriage, but all that were of those incestuous mixtures, which are forbidden, Lev. 18. And though it was not the fault of the issue, yet, to deter people from those unlawful marriages, and unlawful lusts, it was

very convenient that their posterity should thus be made infamous. By this rule Jephthah, though the son of a harlot, a strange woman, (Judg. 11. 1, 2.) yet was not a bastard in the sense of this law. And as for the eunuchs, though by this law they seemed to be cast out of the vineyard as dry trees, which they complain of, (Isa. 56. 3.) yet it is there promised, (v. 5.) that if they took care of their duty to God, as far as they were admitted, by keeping his sabbaths, and choosing the things that pleased him, the want of this privilege should be made up to them with such spiritual blessings as would entitle them to an everlasting name.

(2.) Upon Ammonites and Moabites, the posterity of Lot, who, for his outward convenience, had separated himself from Abraham, Gen. 13. 11. And we do not find that he or his ever joined themselves again to the children of the covenant. They are here cut off to the *tenth generation*, that is, (as some think it is explained,) for ever. Compare Neh. 13. 1. The reason of this quarrel which Israel must have with them, so as not to *seek their peace*, (v. 6.) is because the unkindness they had now lately done to the camp of Israel, notwithstanding the orders God had given not to distress or vex them, Deut. 2. 9, 19. [1.] It was bad enough that they did not *meet them with bread and water in the way*, (v. 4.) that they did not as allies, or at least as neutral states, bring victuals into their camp, which they should have been duly paid for. It was well that God's Israel did not need their kindness, God himself following them with *bread and water*. However, this omission of the Ammonites should be remembered against their nation in future ages. Note, God will certainly reckon, not only with those that oppose his people, but with those that do not help and further them, when it is in the power of their hand to do it. The charge at the great day is for an omission, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat*. [2.] The Moabites had done worse, they hired Balaam to curse them, v. 4. It is true, God *turned the curse into a blessing*, (v. 5.) not only changing the word in Balaam's mouth, but making that really turn to the honour and advantage of Israel, which was designed for their ruin. But though the design was defeated, and over-ruled for good, the Moabites' wickedness was not the less provoking. God will deal with sinners, not only according to their deeds, but according to their endeavours, Ps. 28. 4.

(3.) The Edomites and Egyptians have not so deep a mark of displeasure put upon them, as the Moabites and Ammonites had. If an Edomite or an Egyptian turned proselyte, his grand-children should be looked upon as members of the congregation of the Lord to all intents and purposes, v. 7, 8. We should think that the Edomites had been more injurious to the Israelites than the Ammonites, and deserved as little favour from them, (Numb. 20. 20.) and yet "*Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite*, as thou must an Ammonite, for he is thy brother." Note, The unkindness of near relations, though by many worse taken, yet should with us, for that reason, because of their relation, be first forgiven. And then as to the Egyptians here is a strange reason given why they must not be abhorred, "*Thou wast a stranger in their land*, and therefore, though hardly used there, be civil to them, for old acquaintance sake." They must not remember their bondage in Egypt, for the keeping up of any ill-will to the Egyptians, but only for the magnifying of God's power and goodness in their deliverance.

9. When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing. 10. If there be among you any man that is not clean by reason of un-

cleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp: 11. But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash *himself* with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp *again*. 12. Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: 13. And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: 14. For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy; that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

Israel was now encamped, and this vast army was just entering upon action, which was likely to keep them together for a long time, and therefore it was fit to give them particular directions for the good ordering of their camp. And the charge is in one word to be *clean*. They must take care to keep their camp pure from *moral ceremonial*, and *natural* pollution.

1. From *moral* pollution; (v. 2.) *When the host goes forth against thine enemy*, then look upon thyself as in a special manner engaged to *keep thyself from every evil thing*. (1.) The soldiers themselves must take heed of sin, for sin takes off the edge of valour; guilt makes men cowards. They that put their lives in their hands, are concerned to make and keep their peace with God, and preserve a conscience void of offence; then may they look death in the face without terror. Soldiers, in executing their commission, must keep themselves from gratifying the lusts of malice, covetousness, or uncleanness, for those are wicked things; must keep themselves from the idols, or accursed things, they found in the camps they plundered. (2.) Even they that tarried at home, the body of the people, and every particular person, must at that time especially keep from every wicked thing, lest by sin they provoke God to withdraw his presence from the host, and give victory to the enemy for the correcting of his own people. Times of war should be times of reformation, else how can we expect God should hear and answer our prayers for success? Ps. 66. 18. See 1 Sam. 7. 3.

2. From *ceremonial* pollution, which might befall a person, when unconscious of it, for which he was bound to wash his flesh in water, and look upon himself as *unclean until the even*, Lev. 15. 16. A soldier, notwithstanding the constant service and duty he had to do in the camp, must be so far from looking upon himself as discharged from the observance of that ceremony, that more was required from him than at any other time; had he been at his own house, he needed only to wash his flesh, but being in the army, he must go abroad out of the camp, as one concerned to keep it pure, and ashamed of his own impurity, and not return till after sun-set, v. 10, 11. By this trouble and reproach, which even involuntary pollutions exposed men to, they were taught to keep up a very great dread of all fleshly lusts. It were well if military men would consider this.

3. From *natural* pollution; the camp of the Lord must have nothing offensive in it, v. 12. 14. It is strange that the divine law, or at least the solemn order and direction of Moses, should extend to a

thing of this nature; but the design of it was to teach them, (1.) Modesty, and a good decorum; nature itself teaches them thus to distinguish themselves from beasts that know no shame. (2.) Cleanliness, and (though not niceness, yet) neatness, even in their camp. Impurity is offensive to the senses God has endued us with, prejudicial to the health, a wrong to the comfort of human life, and an evidence of a careless slothful temper of mind. (3.) Purity from the pollutions of sin; if there must be this care taken to preserve the body clean and sweet, much more should we be solicitous to keep the mind so. (4.) A reverence of the divine majesty. This is the reason here given; *for the Lord thy God walketh by his ark, the special token of his presence, in the midst of thy camp*; with respect to that external symbol this external purity is required, which (though not insisted on in the letter when that reason ceases, yet) teaches us to preserve inward purity of soul, in consideration of the eye of God, which is always upon us. By this expression of respect to the presence of God among them, they were taught both to fortify themselves against sin, and to encourage themselves against their enemies with the consideration of that presence. (5.) A regard one to another. The filthiness of one is noisome to many; this law of cleanliness therefore teaches us not to do that which will be justly offensive to our brethren, and grieve them. It is a law against nuisances.

15. Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: 16. He shall dwell with thee, *even* among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him. 17. There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. 18. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the Lord thy God. 19. Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury. 20. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 21. When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. 22. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. 23. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; *even* a free-will-offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth. 24. When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put *any* in thy vessel. 25. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou

mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

Orders are here given about five several things, which have no relation one to another.

I. The land of Israel is here made a sanctuary, or city of refuge, for servants that were wronged and abused by their masters, and fled thither for shelter from the neighbouring countries, *v. 15, 16*. We cannot suppose that they were hereby obliged to give entertainment to all the unprincipled men that ran from service; Israel needed not (as Rome at first did) to be thus peopled. But, 1. They must not deliver up the trembling servant to his enraged master, till upon trial it appeared that the servant had wronged his master, and was justly liable to punishment. Note, It is an honourable thing to shelter and protect the weak, provided they be not wicked. God allows his people to patronise the oppressed. The angel bid Hagar return to her mistress, and St. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master Philemon, because they had neither of them any cause to go away, nor were either of them exposed to any danger in returning. But the servant here is supposed to escape, that is to run for his life, to the people of Israel, of whom he had heard (as Benhadad of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings 20. 31.) that they were a merciful people, to save himself from the fury of a tyrant; and in that case to deliver him up, is to throw a lamb into the mouth of a lion. 2. If it appeared that the servant was abused, they must not only protect him, but supposing him willing to embrace their religion, they must give him all the encouragement that might be, to settle among them. Care is taken both that he should not be imposed upon in the place of his settlement—let it be that *which he shall choose*, and *where it liketh him best*; and that he should not exchange one hard master for many—*thou shalt not oppress him*. Thus would he soon find a comfortable difference between the land of Israel and other lands, and would choose it to be his rest for ever. Note, Proselytes and converts to the truth should be treated with particular tenderness, that they may have no temptation to return.

II. The land of Israel must be no shelter for the unclean; no whore, no sodomite, must be suffered to live among them, (*v. 17, 18.*) neither a whore nor a whoremonger. No houses of uncleanness must be kept either by men or women. Here is, 1. A good reason intimated why there should be no such wickedness tolerated among them: they were Israelites. That seems to have an emphasis laid upon it. For a daughter of Israel to be a whore, or a son of Israel a whoremaster, is to reproach the stock they are come of, the people they belong to, and the God they worship. It is bad in any, but worse in Israelites, *a holy nation*, 2 Sam. 13. 12. 2. A just mark of displeasure put upon this wickedness, that the hire of a whore, that is, the money she gets by her whoring, and the price of a dog, that is, of the sodomite, pimp, or whoremaster, (so I incline to understand it, for such are called *dogs*, Rev. 22. 15.) the money he gets by these lewd and villanous practices, no part of it shall be *brought into the house of the Lord* (as was commonly done by the prostitutes among the Gentiles) *for any vow*. This intimates, (1.) That God would not accept of any offering at all from such wicked people; they had nothing to bring an offering of, but what they got by their wickedness, and therefore their sacrifice could not but be an *abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 15. 8. (2.) That they should not think, by making and paying vows, and bringing offerings to the Lord, to obtain leave to go on in this sin, as (it should seem) some that followed that trade suggested to them—

selves, when their offerings were admitted, Prov. 7. 14, 15. *This day have I paid my vows, therefore came I forth to meet thee.* Nothing should be accepted in commutation of penance. (3.) That we cannot honour God with our substance, unless it be honestly and honourably given. It must not only be considered what we give, but how we got it; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and uncleanness too.

III. The matter of usury is here settled, v. 19, 20. 1. They must not lend upon usury to an Israelite. They had and held their estates immediately from and under God, who, while he distinguished them from all other people, might have ordered, had he so pleased, that they should have all things in common among themselves, but instead of that, and in token of their joint interest in the good land he had given them, he only appointed them, as there was occasion, to lend to one another without interest; which, among them, would be little or no loss to the lender, because their land was so divided, their estates were so little, and there was so little of merchandise among them, that it was seldom or never that they had occasion to borrow any great sums, except for the subsistence of their families, when the fruits of their ground had met with any disaster, or the like; and in such a case, for a small matter to insist upon usury, would have been very barbarous. Where the borrower gets, or hopes to get, it is just that the lender should share in the gain; but to him that borrows for his necessary food, pity must be showed, and we must lend, hoping for nothing again, if we have wherewithal to do it, Luke 6. 35. 2. They might lend upon usury to a stranger, who was supposed to live by trade, and (as we say) by turning the penny, and therefore got by what he borrowed, and came among them in hopes to do so. By this it appears that usury is not in itself oppressive; for they must not oppress a stranger, and yet might exact usury from him.

IV. The performance of the vows wherewith we have bound our souls, is here required; and it is a branch of the law of nature, v. 21. . 23. 1. We are here left at our liberty whether we will make vows or no. *If thou shalt forbear to vow,* (some particular sacrifice and offering, more than was commanded by the law,) *it shall be no sin to thee.* God had already signified his readiness to accept a free-will-offering thus vowed, though it were but a little *fine flour*, (Lev. 2. 4, &c.) which was encouragement enough to those who were so inclined. But lest the priests, who had the largest share of those vows and voluntary offerings, should sponge upon the people, by pressing it upon them as their duty to make such vows, beyond their ability and inclination, they are here expressly told that it should not be reckoned a sin in them, if they did not make any such vows, as it would be if they omitted any of the sacrifices that God had particularly required. For (as Bishop Patrick well expresses it) God would have men to be easy in his service, and all their offerings to be free and cheerful. 2. We are here laid under the highest obligations, when we have made a vow, to perform it, and to perform it speedily; *Thou shalt not slack to pay it;* lest if it be delayed beyond the first opportunity, the zeal abate, the vow be forgotten, or something happen to disable thee for the performance of it. *That which is gone out of thy lips* as a solemn and deliberate vow, must not be recalled, but *thou shalt keep and perform it*, punctually and fully. The rule of the gospel goes somewhat further than this; (2 Cor. 9. 7.) *Every one, according as he purposeth in his heart,* though it have not gone out of his lips, *so let him give.* Here is a good reason why we should pay our vows, that if we do not, *God will require it of us*, will surely and severely reckon with us, not only for ly-

ing, but for going about to mock him, who cannot be mocked. See Eccl. 7. 4, 5.

V. Allowance is here given, when they passed through a corn-field, or a vineyard, to pluck and eat of the corn or grapes that grew by the road-side, whether it was done for necessity or delight, only they must carry none away with them, v. 24, 25. Therefore the disciples were not censured for plucking the ears of corn, (it was well enough known that the law allowed it,) but for doing it on the sabbath-day, which the tradition of the elders had forbidden. Now, 1. This law intimated to them what great plenty of corn and wine they should have in Canaan, so much, that a little would not be missed out of their fruits; they should have enough for themselves and all their friends. 2. It provided for the support of poor travellers, to relieve the fatigue of their journeys, and teaches us to be kind to such. The Jews say, "This law was chiefly intended in favour of labourers, who were employed in gathering in their harvest and vintages; their mouths must not be muzzled any more than that of the ox when he treads out the corn."

3. It teaches us not to insist upon property in a small matter, of which it is easy to say, *What is that between me and thee?* It was true, the grapes which the passenger ate, were none of his own, nor did the proprietor give them him; but the thing was of so small value, that he had reason to think, were he present, he would not deny them him, any more than he himself would grudge the like courtesy, and therefore it was no theft to take them. 4. It used them to hospitality, and teaches us to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, and not to think every thing lost that is given away. Yet, *lastly*, It forbids us to abuse the kindness of our friends, and to take the advantage of fair concessions to make unreasonable encroachments: we must not draw an ell from those that give but an inch; they may eat of their neighbour's grapes, but it does not therefore follow that they may carry them away.

## CHAP. XXIV.

In this chapter we have, I. The toleration of divorce, v. 1. . 4. II. A discharge of new-married men from the war, v. 5. III. Laws concerning pledges, v. 6, 10. . 13, 17. IV. Against man-stealing, v. 7. V. Concerning the leprosy, v. 8, 9. VI. Against the injustice of masters toward their servants, v. 14, 15. Judges in capital causes, (v. 16.) and civil concerns, v. 17, 18. VII. Of charity to the poor, v. 19. . 22.

1. **WHEN** a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. 3. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 4. Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.



This is that permission which the Pharisees erroneously referred to as a precept, Matth. 19. 7. *Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement*; it was not so; our Saviour told them that he only suffered it because of the hardness of their hearts, lest if they had not had liberty to divorce their wives, they should have ruled them with rigour, and, it may be, have been the death of them. It is probable that divorces were in use before, they are taken for granted, (Lev. 21. 14.) and Moses thought it needful here to give some rules concerning them.

1. That a man might not divorce his wife unless he *found some uncleanness in her*, v. 1. It was not sufficient to say that he did not like her, or that he liked another better, but he must show cause for his dislike, something that made her disagreeable and unpleasant to him, though it might not make her so to another. This uncleanness must mean something less than adultery; for, for that, she was to die; and less than the suspicion of it, for in that case, he might give her the waters of jealousy; but it means either a light carriage, or a cross froward disposition, or some loathsome sore or disease; nay, some of the Jewish writers suppose that an offensive breath might be a just ground for divorce. Whatever is meant by it, doubtless it was something considerable; so that their modern doctors erred, who allowed divorce for every cause, though ever so trivial, Matth. 19. 3.

2. That it must be done, not by word of mouth, for that might be spoken hastily, but by writing, and that put in due form, and solemnly declared, before witnesses, to be his own act and deed, which was a work of time, and left room for consideration, that it might not be done rashly.

3. That the husband must give it into the hand of his wife, and send her away; which, some think, obliged him to endow her, and make provision for her, according to her quality, and such as might help to marry her again; for this there was good reason, since the cause of quarrel was not her fault, but her infelicity.

4. That being divorced, it was lawful for her to marry another husband, v. 2. The divorce had dissolved the bond of marriage as effectually as death could; so that she was as free to marry again, as if her first husband had been naturally dead.

5. That if her second husband (died or) divorced her, then still she might marry a third, but her first husband should never take her again, (v. 3, 4.) which he might have done, if she had not married another; for by that act of her own she had perfectly renounced him for ever, and, as to him, was looked upon as defiled, though not as to another person. The Jewish writers say that this was to prevent a most vile and wicked practice which the Egyptians had, of changing wives; or perhaps it was intended to prevent men's rashness in putting away their wives; for the wife that was divorced, would be apt, in revenge, to marry another immediately, and perhaps the husband that divorced her, how much soever he thought to mend himself by another choice, would find the next worse, and something in her more disagreeable; so that he would wish for his first wife again. "No," (says this law,) "you shall not have her, you should have kept her when you had her." Note, It is best to be content with such things as we have, since changes made by discontent often prove for the worse. The uneasiness we know, is commonly better, though we are apt to think it worse, than that which we do not know. By the strictness of this law, God illustrates the riches of his grace in his willingness to be reconciled to his people that had gone a whoring from him, (Jer. 3. 1.) *Thou hast played*

*the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me; for his thoughts and ways are above ours.*

5. When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: *but* he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken. 6. No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a *man's* life to pledge. 7. If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you. 8. Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do. 9. Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt. 10. When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. 11. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. 12. And if the man *be* poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: 13. In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

Here is,

I. Provision made for the preservation and confirmation of love between new-married people, v. 5. This fitly follows upon the laws concerning divorce, which would be prevented if their affection to each other were well settled at first. If the husband were much abroad from his wife the first year, his love to her would be in danger of cooling, and of being drawn aside to others whom he would meet with abroad; therefore his service to his country in war, embassies, or other public business that would call him from home, shall be dispensed with, *that he may cheer up the wife which he has taken.* Note, 1. It is of great consequence that love be kept up between husband and wife, and that every thing be very carefully avoided, which might make them strange one to another, especially at first; for in that relation, where there is not the love that should be, there is an inlet ready to abundance of guilt and grief. 2. One of the duties of that relation, is to cheer up one another, under the cares and crosses that happen, as helpers of each other's joy; for a cheerful heart does good like a medicine.

II. A law against *man-stealing*, v. 7. It was not death by the law of Moses to steal cattle or goods, but to steal a child, or a weak and simple man, or one that a man had in his power, and to make merchandise of him, this was a capital crime, and could not be expiated, as other thefts, by restitution; so much is *a man better than a sheep*, Matth. 12. 12. It was a very heinous offence, for, 1. It was robbing the public of one of its members. 2. It was taking away a man's liberty, the liberty of a free-born Israelite, which was next in value

to his life. 3. It was driving a man out from the inheritance of the land, to the privileges of which he was entitled, and bidding him go serve other gods, as David complains against Saul, 1 Sam. 26. 19.

III. A memorandum concerning the leprosy, v. 8, 9. 1. The laws concerning it must be carefully observed. The laws concerning it we had, Lev. 13, 14. They are here said to be commanded to the *priests and Levites*, and therefore are not repeated in a discourse to the people; but the people are here charged, in case of leprosy, to apply themselves to the priest according to the law, and to abide by his judgment, so far as it agreed with the law, and the plain matter of fact. The plague of leprosy being usually a particular mark of God's displeasure for sin; he in whom the signs of it did appear, ought not to conceal it, or cut out the signs of it, or apply himself to the physician for relief; but he must go to the priest and follow his directions. Thus they that feel their consciences under guilt and wrath, must not cover it, or endeavour to shake off their convictions, but by repentance, and prayer, and humble confession, take the appointed way to peace and pardon. 2. The particular case of Miriam, who was smitten with leprosy for quarrelling with Moses, must not be forgotten. It was an explication of the law concerning the leprosy. Remember that, and, (1.) "Take heed of sinning after the similitude of her transgression, by despising dominions, and speaking evil of dignities, lest you thereby bring upon yourselves the same judgment." (2.) "If any of you be smitten with a leprosy, expect not that the law should be dispensed with, nor think it hard to be shut out of the camp, and so made a spectacle; there is no remedy; Miriam herself, though a prophetess, and the sister of Moses, was not exempted, but was forced to submit to this severe discipline, when she was under this divine rebuke." Thus David, Hezekiah, Peter, and other great men, when they had sinned, humbled themselves, and took to themselves the shame and grief; let us not expect to be reconciled upon easier terms.

IV. Some necessary orders given about pledges or pawns for the security of money lent. They are not forbidden to take such securities as would save the lender from loss, and oblige the borrower to be honest; but, 1. They must not take the millstone for a pledge, (v. 6.) for with that they ground the corn that was to be bread for their families; or if it were a public mill, with it the miller got his livelihood; and so it forbids the taking of any thing for a pledge, by the want of which a man was in danger of being undone. Consonant to this is the ancient common law of England, which provides, That no man be distrained of the utensils or instruments of his trade or profession, as the axe of a carpenter, or the books of a scholar, or beasts belonging to the plough, as long as there are other beasts, of which distress may be made. (*Coke, 1 Inst. fol. 47.*) This teaches us to consult the comfort and subsistence of others as much as our own advantage. That creditor who cares not though his debtor and his family starve, nor is at all concerned what becomes of them, so he may but get his money or secure it, goes contrary, not only to the law of Christ, but even to the law of Moses too. 2. They must not go into the borrower's house to fetch the pledge, but must stand without, and he must bring it, v. 10, 11. *The borrower* (says Solomon) *is servant to the lender*; therefore lest the lender should abuse the advantage he has against him, and improve it for his own interest, it is provided that he take not what he pleases, but what the borrower can best spare. A man's house is his castle, even the poor man's house is so, and is here taken under the protection of the law. 3.

That a poor man's bed-clothes should never be taken for a pledge, v. 12, 13. This we had before, Exod. 22. 26, 27. If they were taken in the morning, they must be brought back again at night, which is in effect to say that they must not be taken at all. "Let the poor debtor sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee," that is, "pray for thee, and praise God for thy kindness to him." Note, Poor debtors ought to be sensible (more sensible than commonly they are) of the goodness of those creditors that do not take all the advantage of the law against them, and to repay their kindnesses by their prayers for them, when they are not in a capacity to repay it in any other way. "Nay, thou shalt not only have the prayers and good wishes of thy poor brother, but it shall be righteousness to thee before the Lord thy God," that is, "It shall be accepted and rewarded as an act of mercy to thy brother, and obedience to thy God, and an evidence of thy sincere conformity to the law. Though it may be looked upon by men, as an act of weakness, to deliver up the securities thou hast for thy debt, yet it shall be looked upon by thy God as an act of goodness, which shall in no wise lose its reward."

14. Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, *whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates*: 15. At his day thou shalt give *him* his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he *is* poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee. 16. The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 17. Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, *nor* of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge: 18. But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing. 19. When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. 20. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 21. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean *it* afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 22. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt; therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Here,

I. Masters are commanded to be just to their poor servants, v. 14, 15. 1. They must not oppress them, either by overloading them with work, giving them undue and unreasonable rebukes, or withholding from them proper maintenance. A servant, though a stranger to the commonwealth

of Israel, must not be abused, "For *thou wast a bond-man* in the land where thou wast a stranger, (v. 18.) and thou knowest what a grievous thing it is to be oppressed by a task-master, and therefore, in tenderness to those that are servants and strangers, and in gratitude to that God who set thee at liberty, and settled thee in a country of thy own, *Thou shalt not oppress a servant.*" Let not masters be tyrants to their servants, for *their Master is in heaven.* See Job 31. 13. 2. They must be faithful and punctual in paying them their wages. "*At his day thou shalt give him his hire,* not only pay it him in full, without fraud, but pay it in time, without further delay. As soon as he has done his day's work, if he desire it, let him have his day's wages," as those labourers, (Matth. 20. 8.) *when even was come.* He that works by day-wages, is supposed to live from hand to mouth, and cannot have to-morrow's bread for his family, till he is paid for his day's labour. If the wages be withheld, (1.) It will be grief for the servant, for, poor man, he *sets his heart upon it*, or, as the word is, he *lifts up his soul to it*, he is earnestly desirous of it, as the reward of his work, (Job. 7. 2.) and depends upon it as the gift of God's providence for the maintenance of his family. A compassionate master, though it should be somewhat inconvenient to himself, would not disappoint the expectation of a poor servant that is so fond to think of receiving his wages. But that is not the worst. (2.) It will be guilt to the master. "The injured servant will cry against thee to the Lord; since he has no one else to appeal to, he will lodge his appeal in the court of heaven, and it will be sin to thee." Or if he do not complain, the cause will speak for itself, *the hire of the labourers which is kept back by fraud, will itself cry*, Jam. 5. 4. It is a greater sin than most people think it is, and will be found so in the great day, to put hardships upon poor servants, labourers, and workmen, that we employ. God will do them right if men do not.

II. Magistrates and judges are commanded to be just in their administrations. 1. In those which we call *Pleas of the crown*, a standing rule is here given, that *the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers*, v. 16. If the children make themselves obnoxious to the law, let them suffer for it, but let not the parents either suffer for them, or with them; it is grief enough to them to see their children suffer: if the parents be guilty, let them die for their own sin; but though God, the sovereign Lord of life, sometimes visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, and when he deals with nations in their national capacity, yet he does not allow men to do so. Accordingly, we find Amaziah sparing the children, even then when their fathers were put to death for killing the king, 2 Kings 14. 6. It was in an extraordinary case and no doubt with special direction from heaven, that Saul's sons were put to death for his offence, and they died rather as sacrifices than as malefactors, 2 Sam. 21. 9, 14. 2. In common pleas between party and party, great care must be taken that none whose cause was just, should fare the worse for their weakness, nor for their being destitute of friends, as strangers, fatherless, and widows, v. 17. "*Thou shalt not pervert their judgment,* nor force them to give their very raiment for a pledge, by defrauding them of their right." Judges must be advocates for those that cannot speak for themselves, and have no friends to speak for them.

III. The rich are commanded to be kind and charitable to the poor. Many ways they are ordered to be so, by the law of Moses. The particular instance of charity here prescribed, is, that they should not be greedy in gathering in their

corn, and grapes, and olives, so as to be afraid of leaving any behind them, but be willing to overlook some, and let the poor have the gleanings, v. 19.-22. 1. "Say not, 'It is all my own, and why should not I have it?'" But learn a generous contempt of property in small matters. One sheaf or two forgotten, will make thee never the poorer at the year's end, and it will do somebody good, if thou have it not." 2. "Say not, '*What I give I will give,* and know whom I give it to, why should I leave it to be gathered by I know not whom, that will never thank me?'" But trust God's providence with the disposal of thy charity, perhaps that direct it to the most necessitous." Or, "Thou mayest reasonably think it will come to the hands of the most industrious, that are forward to seek and gather that which this law provides for them." 3. "Say not, 'What should the poor do with grapes and olives? It is enough for them to have bread and water;' for since they have the same senses that the rich have, why should not they have some little share of the delights of sense?" Boaz ordered handfuls of corn to be left on purpose for Ruth, and God blessed him. All that is left, is not lost.

### CHAP. XXV.

Here is, I. A law to moderate the scourging of malefactors, v. 1.-3. II. A law in favour of the ox that treads out the corn, v. 4. III. For the disgracing of him that refused to marry his brother's widow, v. 5.-10. IV. For the punishment of an immodest woman, v. 11, 12. V. For just weights and measures, v. 13.-16. VI. For the destroying of Amalek, v. 17.-19.

1. **I**F there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that *the judges* may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. 2. And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. 3. Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee. 4. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*.

Here is,

I. A direction to the judges in scourging malefactors, v. 1.-8. 1. It is here supposed, that if a man be charged with a crime, the accuser and the accused (*Actor* and *Reus*) should be brought face to face before the judges, that the controversy may be determined. 2. If a man were accused of a crime, and the proof fell short, so that the charge could not be made out against him by the evidence, then he was to be acquitted, "*Thou shalt justify the righteous,*" that is, "him that appears to the court to be so." If the accusation be proved, then the conviction of the accused is a justification of the accuser, as righteous in the prosecution. 3. If the accused were found guilty, judgment must be given against him, "*Thou shalt condemn the wicked;*" for to *justify the wicked* is as much an abomination to the Lord, as it is to *condemn the righteous*, Prov. 17. 15. 4. If the crime were not made capital by the law, then the criminal must be beaten. A great many precepts we have met with, which have in any particular penalty annexed to them, the violation of most of which, according to the constant practice of the Jews, was punished by scourging,

from which no person's rank or quality did exempt him, if he were a delinquent, but with this proviso, that he should never be upbraided with it, nor should it be looked upon as leaving any mark of infamy or disgrace upon him. The directions here given for the scourging of criminals, are, (1.) That it be done solemnly; not tumultuously through the streets, but in open court before the judge's face, and with so much deliberation as that the stripes might be numbered. The Jews say, that while execution was in doing, the chief justice of the court read, with a loud voice, Deut. 28. 58, 59. and 29. 9. and concluded with those words, Ps. 78. 38, *But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity.*

Thus it was made a sort of religious act, and so much the more likely to reform the offender himself, and to be a warning to others. (2.) That it be done in proportion to the crime, *according to his fault*, that some crimes might appear, as they are, more heinous than others, the criminal being *beaten with many stripes*, to which, perhaps, there is an allusion, Luke 12. 47, 48. (3.) That how great soever the crime was, the number of stripes should never exceed *forty, v. 3.* *Forty save one* was the common usage, as appears, 2 Cor. 11. 24. It seems, they always gave Paul as many stripes as ever they gave to any malefactor whatsoever. They abated one, either for fear of having miscounted, (though one of the judges was appointed to number the stripes,) or, because they would never go to the utmost rigour, or, because the execution was usually done with a whip of three lashes, so that thirteen stripes (each one being counted for three) made up thirty-nine, but one more by that reckoning would have been forty-two. The reason given for this, is, *lest thy brother should seem vile unto thee.* He must still be looked upon as a *brother*, (2 Thess. 3. 15.) and his reputation as such was preserved by this merciful limitation of his punishment. It saves him from seeming vile to his brethren, when God himself by his law takes this care of him. Men must not be treated as dogs; nor must those seem *vile in our sight*, to whom, for aught we know, God may yet give grace, to make them *precious in his sight*.

II. Charge the husbandmen not to hinder their cattle from eating when they were working, if meat were within their reach, *v. 4.* This instance of the beast that trod out the corn, (to which there is an allusion in that of the prophet, Hos. 10. 11.) is put for all similar instances. That which makes this law very remarkable above its fellows, (and which countenances the like application of other such laws,) is, that it is twice quoted in the New Testament, to show that it is the duty of the people to give their ministers a comfortable maintenance, 1 Cor. 9. 9, 10. and 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18. It teaches us in the letter of it to make much of the brute-creatures that serve us, and to allow them not only the necessary supports for their life, but the advantages of their labour; and thus we must learn not only to be just, but kind, to all that are employed for our good, not only to maintain but to encourage them, especially those that labour among us in the word and doctrine, and so are employed for the good of our better part.

5. If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her. 6. And it shall be, *that the first-born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead*, that his

name be not put out of Israel. 7. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother: 8. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and *if he stand to it*, and say, I like not to take her; 9. Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. 10. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed. 11. When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets; 12. Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity *her*.

Here is,

I. The law settled concerning the marrying of a brother's widow. It appears from the story of Judah's family that this had been an ancient usage, (Gen. 38. 8.) for the keeping up of distinct families. The case put, is a case that often happens, of a man's dying without issue, it may be in the prime of his time, soon after his marriage, and while his brethren were yet so young as to be unmarried. Now in this case, 1. The widow was not to marry again into any other family, unless all the relations of her husband did refuse her, that the estate she was endowed with, might not be alienated. 2. The husband's brother, or next of kin, must marry her, partly out of respect to her, who, having forgotten her own people and her father's house, should have all possible kindness showed her by the family into which she was married; and partly out of respect to the deceased husband, that though he was dead and gone, he might not be forgotten, nor lost out of the genealogies of his tribes; for the first-born child, which the brother or next kinsman should have by the widow, should be denominated from him that was dead, and entered in the genealogy as his child, *v. 5, 6.* Under that dispensation we have reason to think men had not so clear and certain a prospect of living themselves on the other side death, as we have now, to whom *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*; and therefore they could not but be the more desirous to live in their posterity, which innocent desire was in some measure gratified by this law, an expedient being found out, that though a man had no child by his wife, yet *his name should not be put out of Israel*, that is, out of the pedigree, or, which was equivalent, remain there under the brand of childlessness. The Sadducees put a case to our Saviour upon this law, with a design to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection by it, (Matth. 22. 24, &c.) perhaps insinuating that there was no need of maintaining the immortality of the soul, and a future state, since the law had so well provided for the perpetuating of men's names and families in the world. But, 3. If the brother, or next of kin, declined to do this good office to the memory of him that was gone, what must be done in that case? Why, (1.) He shall not

he compelled to do it, v. 7. If he like her not, he is at liberty to refuse her, which, some think, was not permitted in this case before this law of Moses. Affection is all in all to the comfort of that relation; that is a thing which cannot be forced, and therefore the relation should not be forced without it. (2.) Yet he shall be publicly disgraced for not doing it. The widow, as the person most concerned for the name and honour of the deceased, was to complain to the elders of his refusal; if he persist in it, she was to *pluck off his shoe, and spit in his face*, in open court, (or, as the Jewish doctors moderate it, spit before his face,) thus to fasten a mark of infamy upon him, which was to remain with his family after him, v. 8-10. Note, Those justly suffer in their own reputation, who do not do what they ought, to preserve the name and honour of others. He that would not build up his brother's house, deserved to have this blemish put upon his own, that it should be called *The house of him that had his shoe loosed*, in token that he deserved to go barefoot. In the case of Ruth, we find this law executed; (Ruth 4. 7.) but because, upon the refusal of the next kinsman, there was another ready to perform the duty of a husband's brother, it was that other that plucked off the shoe, and not the widow; Boaz, and not Ruth.

II. A law for the punishing of an immodest woman, v. 11, 12. The woman that by the foregoing law was to complain against her husband's brother for not marrying her, and to spit in his face before the elders, needed a good measure of assurance; not lest the confidence which that law supported should grow to an excess unbecoming the sex, here is a very severe but just law to punish impudence and immodesty. 1. The instance of it is confessedly scandalous to the highest degree. A woman could not do it, unless she were perfectly lost to all virtue and honour. 2. The occasion is such as might in part excuse it; it was to help her husband out of the hands of one that was too hard for him. Now if the doing of it in a passion, and with such a good intention, was to be so severely punished, much more when it was done wantonly and in lust. 3. The punishment was, that her hand should be cut off; and the magistrates must not pretend to be more merciful than God, *Thine eye shall not pity her*. Perhaps our Saviour alludes to this law, when he commands us to *cut off the right hand that offends us*, or is an occasion of sin to us; better put the greatest hardships that can be upon the body, than ruin the soul for ever. Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and therefore ought to be very carefully preserved and kept up by both sexes.

13. Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. 14. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. 15. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have; that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 16. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God. 17. Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt: 18. How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee; when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. 19. Therefore

it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven: thou shalt not forget it.

Here is,

I. A law against deceitful weights and measures: they must not only not use them, but they must not have them; not have them in the bag, not have them in the house, (v. 13, 14.) for if they had them, they would be strongly tempted to use them. They must not have a great weight and measure to buy by, and a small one to sell by, for that was to cheat both ways, when either was bad enough; as we read of those that made the *ephah* small, in which they measured the corn they sold, and the *shekel* great, by which they weighed the money they received for it, Amos 8. 5. But *thou shalt have a perfect and just weight*, v. 15. That which is the rule of justice, must itself be just; if that be otherwise, it is a constant cheat. This had been taken care of before, Lev. 19. 35, 36. This law is enforced with two very good reasons. 1. That justice and equity will bring down upon us the blessing of God. The way to have our days lengthened, and to prosper, is to be just and fair in all our dealings; *honesty is the best policy*. 2. That fraud and injustice will expose us to the curse of God, v. 16. Not only unrighteousness itself, but all that do unrighteously, are an *abomination to the Lord*. And miserable is that man who is abhorred by his Maker. How hateful, particularly, all the arts of deceit are to God, Solomon several times observes; (Prov. 11. 1.—20. 10, 23.) and the apostle tells us, *that the Lord is the Avenger of all such as overreach and defraud in any matter*, 1 Thess. 4. 6.

II. A law for the rooting out of Amalek. Here is a *just weight*, and a *just measure*; that as Amalek had measured to Israel, so it should be measured to Amalek again.

1. The mischief Amalek did to Israel, must be here remembered, v. 17, 18. When it was first done, it was ordered to be recorded, (Exod. 17. 14-16.) and here the remembrance of it to be preserved, not in personal revenge, for that generation which suffered by the Amalekites was gone, so that they who now lived, and their posterity, could not have any personal resentment of the injury, but in a zeal for the glory of God, (which was insulted by the Amalekites,) that *throne of the Lord* against which the hand of Amalek was stretched out. The carriage of the Amalekites towards Israel is here represented, (1.) As very base and disingenuous. They had no occasion at all to quarrel with Israel, nor did they give them any notice, by a manifesto, or declaration of war; but took them at an advantage when they were just come out of the house of bondage, and, for aught that appeared to them, were only going to *sacrifice to God in the wilderness*. (2.) As very barbarous and cruel; for they smote them that were feeble, whom they should have succoured. The greatest cowards are commonly the most cruel; while those that have the courage of a man, will have the compassions of a man. (3.) As very impious and profane; they feared not God. If they had had any reverence for the majesty of the God of Israel, which they saw a token of in the cloud, or any dread of his wrath, which they lately heard of the power of over Pharaoh, they durst not have made this assault upon Israel. Well, here was the ground of the quarrel: and it shows how God takes what is done against his people, as done

against himself; and that he will particularly reckon with those that discourage and hinder young beginners in religion, that (as Satan's agents) set upon the weak and feeble, either to divert them, or to disquiet them, and offend his little ones.

2. This mischief must in due time be revenged, v. 19. When their wars were finished, by which they were to settle their kingdom, and enlarge their coast, then they must *make war upon Amalek*, (v. 19.) not merely to chase them, but to consume them, to *blot out the remembrance of Amalek*. It was an instance of God's patience that he deferred the vengeance so long, which should have led the Amalekites to repentance; yet an instance of fearful retribution, that the posterity of Amalek, so long after, were destroyed for the mischief done by their ancestors to the Israel of God. That all the world might see, and say, that *he who toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*. It was near four hundred years after this, that Saul was ordered to put this sentence in execution, (1 Sam. 15.) and was rejected of God because he did not do it effectually, but spared some of that devoted nation, in contempt, not only of the particular orders he received from Samuel, but of this general command here given by Moses, which he could not be ignorant of. David afterward made some destruction of them; and the Simeonites, in Hezekiah's time, smote *the rest that remained*, (1 Chron. 4. 43.) for when God judges, he will overcome.

## CHAP. XXVI.

With this chapter Moses concludes the particular statutes which he thought fit to give Israel in charge at his parting with them; what follows, is by way of sanction and ratification. In this chapter, I. Moses gives them a form of confession, to be made by him that offered the basket of his first-fruits, v. 1. II. The protestation and prayer to be made after the disposal of the third year's tithe, v. 12. 15. III. He binds on all the precepts he had given them, I. By the divine authority; "Not I, but the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes," v. 16. 2. By the mutual covenant between God and them, v. 17. 19.

1. **A**ND it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, 2. That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. 3. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD swore unto our fathers for to give us. 4. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. 5. And thou shalt speak, and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous; 6. And the Egyptians evil-entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. 7. And when we cried unto the LORD God

of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: 8. And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders; 9. And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, *even* a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God: 11. And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite; and the stranger that is among you.

Here is,

I. A good work ordered to be done, and that is, the presenting of a basket of their first-fruits to God every year, v. 1, 2. Beside the *sheaf of first-fruits*, which was offered for the whole land, on the morrow after the passover, (Lev. 23. 10.) every man was to bring for himself a basket of first-fruits at the feast of pentecost, when the harvest was ended, which is therefore called the *feast of first-fruits*, (Exod. 34. 22.) and is said to be kept with a *tribute of free-will-offering*, Deut. 16. 10. But the Jews say, "The first-fruits, if not brought then; might be brought any time after, between that and winter." When a man went into the field or vineyard, at the time when the fruits were ripening, he was to mark that which he observed most forward, and to lay it by for first-fruits, wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates, some of each sort must be put in the same basket with leaves between them, and presented to God in the place which he should choose. Now from this law we may learn, 1. To acknowledge God as the Giver of all those good things which are the support and comfort of our natural life, and therefore to serve and honour him with them. 2. To deny ourselves. What is first ripe we are most fond of; those that are nice and curious, expect to be served with each fruit at its first coming in; *my soul desired the first ripe fruits*, Micah 7. 1. When therefore God appointed them to lay those by for him, he taught them to prefer the glorifying of his name, before the gratifying of their own appetites and desires. 3. To give to God the first and best we have, as those that believe him to be the first and best of beings. They that consecrate the days of their youth, and the prime of their time, to the service and honour of God, bring him their first-fruits, and with such offerings he is well pleased. *I remember the kindness of thy youth*.

II. Good words put into their mouths to be said in doing of this good work, as an explication of the meaning of this ceremony, that it might be a reasonable service. The offerer must begin his acknowledgment before he delivered his basket to the priest, and then must go on with it, when the priest had set down the basket before the altar, as a present to God their great Landlord, v. 3, 4.

1. He must begin with a receipt in full for the good land which God had given them, v. 3. *I profess that I am come now at last, after forty years' wandering, unto the country which the Lord swore to give us*. This was most proper to be said when they came first into Canaan; probably, when they



had been long settled there, they varied from this form. Note, When God has made good his promises to us, he expects that we should own it, to the honour of his faithfulness; this is like giving up the bond, as Solomon does, 1 Kings 8. 56, *There has not failed one word of all his good promise.* And our creature-comforts are then doubly sweet, when we see them flowing from the fountain of the promise.

2. He must remember and own the mean original of that nation, which he was a member of; how great soever they were now, and he himself with them, their beginning was very small, which ought thus to be kept in mind throughout all the ages of their church by this public confession, that they might not be proud of their privileges and advantages, but might for ever be thankful to that God whose grace chose them when they were so low, and raised them so high. Two things they must own for this purpose. (1.) The meanness of their common ancestor. *A Syrian ready to perish was my father*, v. 5. Jacob is here called an *Aramite*, or *Syrian*, because he lived twenty years in Padan-Aram; his wives were of that country, and his children were all born there, except Benjamin; and perhaps the confessor means not Jacob himself, but that son of Jacob who was the father of his tribe. However it be, both father and sons were more than once ready to perish, by Laban's severity, Esau's cruelty, and the famine in the land; which last was the occasion of their going down into Egypt. *Laban the Syrian sought to destroy my father*, so the Chaldee; *had almost destroyed him*, so the Arabic. (2.) The miserable condition of their nation in its infancy. They sojourned in Egypt as strangers, they served there as slaves, (v. 6.) and that a great while: as their father was called a *Syrian*, they might be called *Egyptians*; so that their possession of Canaan being so long discontinued, they could not pretend any tenant-right to it. A poor, despised, oppressed people they were in Egypt, and therefore, though now rich and great, had no reason to be proud, or secure, or forgetful of God.

3. He must thankfully acknowledge God's great goodness, not only to himself in particular, but to Israel in general. (1.) In bringing them out of Egypt, v. 7, 8. It is spoken of here as an act of pity, *he looked on our affliction*; and an act of power, *he brought us forth with a mighty hand*. This was a great salvation, fit to be remembered upon all occasions, and particularly upon this; they need not grudge to bring a basket of *first-fruits* to God, for to him they owed it, that they were not now bringing in the tale of bricks to their cruel task-masters. (2.) In settling them in Canaan, v. 9, *He hath given us this land*. Observe, He must not only give thanks for his own lot, but for the land in general, which was given to Israel; not only for this year's profits, but for the ground itself which produced them, which God had graciously granted to his ancestors, and entailed upon his posterity. Note, The comfort we have in our particular enjoyments, should lead us to be thankful for our share in public peace and plenty; and with present mercies we should bless God for the former mercies we remember, and the further mercies we expect and hope for.

4. He must offer to God his basket of first-fruits, v. 10. I have brought the *first-fruits of the land*, (like a pepper-corn,) as quitrent for the land which thou hast given me. Note, Whatever we give to God, it is but of his own that we give him, 1 Chron. 29. 14. And it becomes us, who receive so much from him, to study what we shall render to him. The basket he set before God; and the priests, as God's receivers, had the first-fruits, as perquisites of their place, and fees for attending, Numb. 18. 12.

*Lastly*, The offerer is here appointed, when he has finished the service, 1. To give glory to God, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*. His first-fruits were not accepted without further acts of adoration. A humble, reverent, thankful heart, is that which God looks at and requires, and without that, all we can put in a basket, will not avail. *If a man would give all the substance of his house to be excused from this, or in lieu of it, it would utterly be condemned*. 2. To take the comfort of it to himself and family, v. 11, *Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing*. It is the will of God that we should be cheerful, not only in our attendance upon his holy ordinances, but in our enjoyments of the gifts of his providence. Whatever good thing God gives us, it is his will that we should make the most comfortable use we can of it, yet still tracing the streams to the Fountain of all comfort and consolation.

12. When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; 13. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments, which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them: 14. I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. 15. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Concerning the disposal of their tithe the third year, we had the law before, ch. 14. 28, 29. The second tithe, which, the other two years, was to be spent in extraordinaries at the feasts, was to be spent, the third year, at home, in entertaining the poor. Now because this was done from under the eye of the priests, and a great confidence was put in the people's honesty, that they would dispose of it according to the law, to the *Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless*, (v. 12.) it is therefore required, that when at the next feast after, they appeared before the Lord, they should there testify (as it were) upon oath, in a religious manner, that they had fully administered, and been true to their trust.

1. They must make a solemn protestation to that purport, v. 13, 14. 1. That no hallowed things were hoarded up; *"I have brought them away out of mine house, nothing now remains there but my own part."* 2. That the poor, and particularly poor ministers, poor strangers, and poor widows, had had their part according to the commandment. It is fit that God, who by his providence gives us all we have, should by his law direct the using of it; and though we are not now under such particular ap-

appropriations of our revenue as they then were, yet, in general, we are commanded to give alms of such things as we have; and then, and not otherwise, all things are clean to us. *Then* we may take the comfort of our enjoyments, when God has thus had his dues out of them. This is a commandment which must not be transgressed, no not with an excuse of its being forgotten, *v.* 13. 3. That none of this tithe had been misapplied to any common use, much less to any ill use. This seems to refer to the tithe of the other two years, which was to be eaten by the owners themselves; they must profess, (1.) That they had not eaten of it in their mourning, when, by their mourning for the dead, they were commonly unclean; or they had not eaten of it grudgingly, as those that all their days eat in darkness. (2.) That they had not sacrilegiously alienated it to any common use, for it was not their own. And, *lastly*, That they had not given it for the dead, for the honour of their dead gods, or in hope of making it beneficial to their dead friends. Now the obliging of them to take this solemn protestation at the three years' end, would be an obligation upon them to deal faithfully, knowing that they must be called upon thus to purge themselves. It is our wisdom to keep conscience clear at all times, that when we come to give up our account, we may lift up our face without spot. The Jews say that this protestation of their integrity was to be made with a low voice, because it looked like a self-commendation; but that the foregoing confession of God's goodness was to be made with a loud voice to his glory. He that durst not make this protestation, must bring his *trespass-offering*, *Lev.* 5. 15.

II. To this solemn protestation they must add a *solemn prayer*, (*v.* 15.) not particularly for themselves, but for *God's people Israel*; for in the common peace and prosperity every particular person prospers and has peace. We must learn from hence to be public-spirited in prayer, and to wrestle with God for blessings for the land and nation, our English Israel, and for the universal church, which we are directed to have an eye to in our prayers, as the *Israel of God*, *Gal.* 6. 16. In this prayer we are taught, 1. To look up to God as in a holy habitation, and from thence to infer that holiness becomes his house, and that he will be sanctified in those that are about him. 2. To depend upon the favour of God, and his gracious cognizance, as sufficient to make us and our people happy. 3. To reckon it wonderful condescension in God to cast an eye even upon so great and honourable a body as Israel was. It is looking down. 4. To be earnest with God for a blessing upon his people Israel, and upon the *land which he has given us*. For how should the earth yield its increase, or, if it does, what comfort can we take in it, unless therewith *God, even our own God, gives us his blessing?* *Ps.* 67. 6.

16. This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. 17. Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: 18. And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldest keep all his commandments; 19. And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in

praise, and in name, and in honour: and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

Two things Moses here urges to enforce all these precepts.

I. That they were the *commands of God*, *v.* 16. They were not the dictates of his own wisdom, nor were they enacted by any authority of his own, but infinite wisdom framed them, and the power of the King of kings made them binding to them. “*The Lord thy God commands thee*, therefore thou art bound in duty and gratitude to obey him, and it is at thy peril if thou disobey. They are his laws, therefore thou shalt do them, for to that end were they given thee: do them and not despise them, do them and not draw back from them; do them not carelessly and hypocritically, but with thy *heart and soul*, thy *whole heart* and thy *whole soul*.”

II. That their covenant with God obliged them to keep these commands. He insists not only upon God's sovereignty over them, but his propriety in them, and the relation wherein they stood to him. The covenant is mutual, and it binds to obedience both ways.

1. That we may perform our part of the covenant, and answer the intentions of that, *v.* 17. “*Thou hast avouched* and solemnly owned and confessed the *Lord Jehovah to be thy God*, thy Prince and Ruler. As he is so by an incontestable right, so he is by thine own consent.” They did this implicitly by their attendance on his word, had done it expressly, (*Exod.* 24.) and were now to do it again before they parted, *ch.* 24. 1. Now this obliges us, in fidelity to our word, as well as in duty to our Sovereign, *to keep his statutes and his commandments*. We really forswore ourselves, and perfidiously violate the most sacred engagements, if, when we have taken the Lord to be our God, we do not make conscience of obeying his commands.

2. That God's part of the covenant also may be made good, and the intentions of that answered, *v.* 18, 19. The *Lord has avouched*, not only taken, but publicly owned, thee to be his *Segullah*, his *peculiar people*, as he has promised thee, that is, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise. Now their obedience was not only the condition of this favour, and of the continuance of it, (if they were not obedient, God would disown them, and cast them off,) but it was also the principal design of this favour. “He has avouched thee on purpose *that thou shouldest keep his commandments*, that thou mightest have both the best directions and the best encouragements in religion.” Thus we are *elected to obedience*, (1 Pet. 1. 2.) *chosen that we should be holy*, (Eph. 1. 4.) purified, a peculiar people, that we might not only do good works, but be zealous in them, *Tit.* 2. 14.

Two things God is here said to design in avouching them to be his peculiar people, *v.* 19. To make them high, and, in order to that, to make them holy; for holiness is true honour, and the only way to everlasting honour. (1.) To make them high above all nations. The greatest honour we are capable of in this world, is, to be taken into covenant with God, and to live in his service. *High in praise*; for God would accept them, that is true praise, *Rom.* 2. 29. Their friends would admire them, *Ps.* 48. 2. Their enemies would envy them, *Zeph.* 3. 19, 20. *High in name*, which, some think, denotes the continuance and perpetuity of that praise, a name that shall not be cut off. And *high in honour*, that is, in all the advantages of wealth and power, which would make them great above their neighbours. See *Jer.* 13. 11. (2.) That they might be a holy people, separated for God, devoted to him, and employed continually in his

service. This God aimed at in taking them to be his people; so that if they did not keep his commandments, they received all this grace in vain.

### CHAP. XXVII.

Moses having very largely and fully set before the people their duty, both to God and one another, in general and in particular instances; having showed them plainly what is good, and what the law requires of them; and having in the close of the foregoing chapter laid them under the obligation both of the command and the covenant, he comes in this chapter to prescribe outward means, I. For the helping of their memories, that they might not forget the law as a strange thing. They must write all the words of this law upon stones, v. 1. 10. II. For the moving of their affections, that they might not be indifferent to the law as a light thing. When they were come into Canaan, the blessings and curses which were the sanctions of the law, were to be solemnly pronounced in the hearing of all Israel, who were to say *Amen* to them, v. 11. 26. And if such a solemnity as this would not make a deep impression upon them, and affect them with the great things of God's law, nothing would.

1. **A**ND Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. 2. And it shall be, on the day when you shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster: 3. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee. 4. Therefore it shall be, when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster. 5. And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up *any* iron tool upon them. 6. Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones; and thou shalt offer burnt-offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God: 7. And thou shalt offer peace-offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God. 8. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly. 9. And Moses, and the priests the Levites, spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; This day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God. 10. Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

Here is,

I. A general charge to the people, to keep God's commandments; for in vain did they know them, unless they would do them. This is pressed upon them, 1. With all authority. *Moses with the elders of Israel*, the rulers of each tribe, v. 1. and again, v. 9. *Moses and the priests the Levites*; so that the charge is given by Moses who was king in Jesh-

urun, and by their lords, both spiritual and temporal, in concurrence with him. Lest they should think that it was Moses only, an old and dying man, that made such ado about religion, or the priests and Levites only whose trade it was to attend religion, and who had their maintenance out of it; the elders of Israel, whom God had placed in honour and power over them, and who were men of business in the world, and likely to be long so when Moses was gone, they commanded their people to *keep God's law*. Moses having put some of his honour upon them, joins them in commission with himself, in giving this charge, as St. Paul sometimes in his epistles joins with himself Silvanus and Timotheus. Note, All that have any interest in others, or power over them, should use it for the support and furtherance of religion among them. Though the supreme power of a nation provide ever so good laws for this purpose, if inferior magistrates in their places, and ministers in their's, and masters of families in their's, do not execute their offices, it will all be to little effect. 2. With all importunity. They press it upon them with the utmost earnestness, (v. 9, 10.) *Take heed and hearken, O Israel*. It is a thing that requires and deserves the highest degree of caution and attention. They tell them of their privilege and honour, "*This day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God*, the Lord having avouched thee to be his own, and being now about to put thee in possession of Canaan which he had long promised as *thy God*, (Gen. 17. 7, 8.) and which if he had failed to do in due time, he would have been ashamed to be called thy God, Heb. 11. 16. Now thou art more than ever his people, therefore *obey his voice*." Privileges should be improved as engagements to duty. Should not a people be ruled by their God?

II. A particular direction to them, with great solemnity to register the words of this law, as soon as they were come into Canaan. It was to be done but once, and at their entrance into the land of promise, in token of their taking possession of it under the several provisos and conditions contained in this law. There was a solemn ratification of the covenant between God and Israel at mount Sinai, there was an altar erected, and twelve pillars, and the book of the covenant was produced, Exod. 24. 4. That which is here appointed, is a solemnity somewhat like that.

1. They must set up a monument on which they must write the words of this law. (1.) The monument itself was to be very mean; only rough unhewn stones plastered over; not polished marble or alabaster, nor brass tables, but common plaster upon stone, v. 2. It is repeated again, (v. 4.) and orders given that it be written, not very finely, to be admired by the curious, but very plainly, that he who runs, might read it, Hab. 2. 2. The word of God needs not to be set off by the art of man; nor embellished with the *enticing words of man's wisdom*. But, (2.) The inscription was to be very great, *All the words of this law*, v. 3. and again, v. 8. Some understand it only of the covenant between God and Israel, mentioned ch. 26. 17, 18. Let this heap be set up for a witness, like the memorial of the covenant between Laban and Jacob, which was nothing but a heap of stones thrown hastily together, upon which they did eat together in token of friendship, (Gen. 31. 46, 47.) and that stone which Joshua set up, Josh. 24. 27. Others think that the curses of the covenant in this chapter were written upon this monument, the rather, because it was set up in mount Ebal, v. 4. Others think that the whole book of Deuteronomy was written upon this monument; or at least the statutes and judgments from ch. 12. to the end of ch. 26. And it is not improbable, that the heap might be so large as, taking

in all the sides of it, to contain so copious an inscription; unless we will suppose (as some do) that the ten commandments only were here written; as an authentic copy of the close rolls which were laid up in the ark. They must write this when they were gone into Canaan, and yet Moses says, (v. 3.) *"Write it that thou mayest go in,"* that is, "that thou mayest go in with comfort, and assurance of success and settlement, otherwise, it were well for thee not to go in at all. Write it as the conditions of thine entry, and own that thou comest in upon these terms, and no other: since Canaan is given by promise, it must be held by obedience."

2. They must also set up an altar. By the words of the law which were written upon the plaster, God *spake to them*; By the altar, and the sacrifices offered upon it, they spake to God; and thus was communion kept up between them and God. The word and prayer must go together. Though they might not, of their own heads, set up any altar beside that at the tabernacle, yet, by the appointment of God, they might, upon a special occasion. Elijah built a temporary altar of twelve unhewn stones like this here, when he brought Israel back to this covenant which was now made, 1 Kings 18. 31, 32. Now, (1.) This altar must be made of such stones as they found ready upon the field, not new cut out of the rock, much less squared artificially; *Thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them*, v. 5. Christ, our Altar, is a *stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, (Dan. 2. 34, 35.) and therefore *refused by the builders*, as having no form or comeliness, but accepted of God the Father, and made the Head of the corner. (2.) Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings must be offered upon this altar, (v. 6, 7.) that by them they might give glory to God, and obtain favour. Where the law was written, an altar was set up close by it, to signify, that we could not look with any comfort upon the law, being conscious to ourselves of the violation of it, if it were not for the great Sacrifice by which atonement is made for sin; and the altar was set up on mount Ebal, the mount on which those tribes stood, that said *Amen* to the curses, to intimate, that through Christ we are *redeemed from the curse of the law*. In the Old Testament, the words of the law are written, with the curse annexed, which would fill us with horror and amazement, if we had not in the New Testament (which is bound up with it) an altar erected close by it, which gives us everlasting consolation. (3.) They must eat there, and *rejoice before the Lord their God*, v. 7. This signified, [1.] The consent they gave to the covenant; for the parties to a covenant ratified the covenant by feasting together. They were partakers of the altar, which was God's table, as his servants and tenants, and such they acknowledge themselves; and being put in possession of this good land, bound themselves to pay the rent, and do the services, reserved by the royal grant. [2.] The comfort they took in the covenant; they had reason to rejoice in the law, when they had an altar, a remedial law, so near it; it was a great favour to them, and a token for good, that God *gave them his statutes*; and that they were owned as the people of God, and the *children of the promise*, was what they had reason to rejoice in, though, when this solemnity was to be performed, they were not put in full possession of Canaan; but God has *spoken in his holiness*, and then *I will rejoice*; *Gilead is mine, Manassah is mine*; all my own.

11. And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, 12. These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Jo-

seph, and Benjamin. 13. And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. 14. And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, 15. Cursed *be* the man that maketh *any* graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen. 16. Cursed *be* he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. 17. Cursed *be* he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen. 18. Cursed *be* he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen. 19. Cursed *be* he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen. 20. Cursed *be* he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen. 21. Cursed *be* he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen. 22. Cursed *be* he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. 23. Cursed *be* he that lieth with his mother-in-law. And all the people shall say, Amen. 24. Cursed *be* he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen. 25. Cursed *be* he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen. 26. Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

When the law was written, to be *seen and read by all men*, the sanctions of it were to be published, which, to complete the solemnity of their covenanting with God, they were deliberately to declare their approbation of. This they were before directed to do, (ch. 11. 29, 30.) and therefore the appointment here begins somewhat abruptly, v. 12. There were, it seems, in Canaan, that part of it which afterward fell to the lot of Ephraim, (Joshua's tribe,) two mountains that lay near together, with a valley between, one called *Gerizim*, and the other *Ebal*. On the sides of these two mountains, which faced one another, all the tribes were to be drawn up, six on one side, and six on the other, so that in the valley, at the foot of each mountain, they came pretty near together, so near as that the priest's standing betwixt them might be heard by those that were next them on both sides; then when silence was proclaimed, and attention commanded, one of the priests, or perhaps more, at some distance from each other, pronounced with a loud voice one of the curses here following, and all the people that stood on the side and foot of mount Ebal, (those that stood further off taking the signal from these that stood nearer and within hearing,) said *Amen*; then the contrary blessing was pro-

nounced, "Blessed is he that doeth not so or so," and then those that stood on the side, and at the foot, of mount Gerizim, said *Amen*. This could not but affect them very much with the blessings and curses, the promises and threatenings, of the law, and not only acquaint all the people with them, but teach them to apply them to themselves.

I. Something is to be observed, in general, concerning this solemnity, which was to be done but once and not repeated, but would be talked of to posterity.

1. God appointed which tribes should stand upon mount Gerizim, and which on mount Ebal, (v. 12, 13.) to prevent the disputes that might have arisen, if they had been to dispose of themselves. The six tribes that were appointed for blessing, were all the children of the free women, for to such the promise belongs, Gal. 4. 31. Levi is here put among the rest, to teach ministers to apply to themselves the blessing and curse which they preach to others, and by faith to set their own *Amen* to it.

2. Of those tribes that were to say *Amen* to the blessing, it is said, *They stood to bless the people*, but of the other, *They stood to curse*, not mentioning the people, as loath to suppose that any of this people, whom God had taken for his own, should lay themselves under the curse. Or, perhaps, the different way of expression intimates that there was but one blessing pronounced in general upon the people of Israel, as a happy people, and that should ever be so, *if they were obedient*; and to that blessing the tribes on mount Gerizim were to say *Amen*, "Happy art thou, O Israel, and mayest thou ever be so;" but then the curses come in as exceptions from the general rule; (and we know *Exceptio firmat regulam—The exception confirms the rule*;) Israel is a blessed people, but if there be any particular persons even among them, that do such and such things as are mentioned, let them know that they have no part nor lot in the matter, out are under a curse. This shows how ready God is to bestow the blessing; if any fall under the curse, they may thank themselves, they bring it upon their own heads.

3. The Levites or priests, such of them as were appointed for that purpose, were to pronounce the curses as well as the blessings. They were ordained to bless; (*ch.* 10. 8.) the priests did it daily, Numb. 6. 23. But they must separate between the *precious and the vile*; they must not give that blessing promiscuously, but must declare to whom it did not belong; lest those who had no right to it themselves, should think to share in it by being in the crowd. Note, Ministers must preach the terrors of the law, as well as the comforts of the gospel; must not only allure people to their duty with the promises of a blessing, but awe them to it with the threatenings of a curse.

4. The curses are here expressed, but not the blessings; for as many as were under the law were under the curse; but it was an honour reserved for Christ to bless us, and so to do that for us, which the law could not do, in that it was weak. In Christ's sermon upon the mount, which was the true mount Gerizim, we have blessings only, Matth. 5. 3, &c.

5. To each of the curses the people were to say *Amen*. It is easy to understand the meaning of *Amen* to the blessings. The Jews have a saying to encourage people to say *Amen* to the public prayers, *Whosoever answereth Amen, after him that blesseth, he is as he that blesseth*. But how could they say *Amen* to the curses? (1.) It was a profession of their faith in the truth of them; that these, and the like curses, were not bugbears to frighten children and fools, but the real declaration of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighte-

ousness of men; not one *iota* of which shall fall to the ground. (2.) It was an acknowledgment of the equity of these curses; when they said *Amen*, they did in effect say, not only, *It is certain it shall be so*; but, *It is just it should be so*. They who do such things, deserve to fall and lie under the curse. (3.) It was such an imprecation upon themselves as strongly obliged them to have nothing to do with those evil practices upon which the curse is here entailed. "Let God's wrath fall upon us, if ever we do such things." We read of those that entered into a curse, (and with us that is the usual form of a solemn oath,) to *walk in God's law*, Neh. 10. 29. Nay, the Jews say, (as the learned Bishop Patrick quotes them,) "All the people, by saying this *Amen*, became bound one for another, that they would observe God's laws, by which every man was obliged, as far as he could, to prevent his neighbour from breaking these laws, and to reprove those that had offended, lest they should bear sin and the curse for them."

II. Let us now observe what are the particular sins against which the curses are here denounced.

1. Sins against the second commandment. This flaming sword is set to keep that commandment first, v. 15. They are here cursed, not only that worship images, but that make them or keep them, if they be such (or like such) as idolaters used in the service of their gods; whether it be a graven image or a molten image, it comes all to one, it is *an abomination to the Lord*; though it be not set up in public, but in a secret place; though it be not actually worshipped, nor is it said to be designed for worship, but reserved there with respect, and a constant temptation; he that does this, may perhaps escape punishment from men, but he cannot escape the curse of God.

2. Against the fifth commandment, v. 16. The contempt of parents is a sin so heinous, that it is put next to the contempt of God himself. If a man abused his parents, either in word or deed, he fell under the sentence of the magistrate, and must be *put to death*, Exod. 21. 15, 17. But to set light by them in his heart, was a thing which the magistrate could not take cognizance of, and therefore it is here laid under the curse of God, who knows the heart. Those are cursed children, that carry themselves scornfully and insolently toward their parents.

3. Against the eighth commandment. The curse of God is here fastened, (1.) Upon an unjust neighbour that *removes the land-marks*, v. 17. See *ch.* 19. 14. (2.) Upon an unjust counsellor, who, when his advice is asked, maliciously directs his friend to that which he knows will be to his prejudice; which is *making the blind to wander out of the way*, under pretence of directing him in the way, than which nothing can be either more barbarous or more treacherous, v. 18. Those that seduce others from the way of God's commandments, and entice them to sin, bring this curse upon themselves, which our Saviour has explained, Matth. 15. 14, *The blind lead the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch*. (3.) Upon an unjust judge, that *perverted the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow*, whom he should protect and vindicate, v. 19. These are supposed to be poor and friendless, (nothing to be got by doing them a kindness, nor any thing lost by disobliging them,) and therefore judges may be tempted to side with their adversaries against right and equity; but cursed are such judges.

4. Against the seventh commandment. Incest is a cursed sin, with a *sister, a father's wife, or a mother-in-law*, v. 20, 22, 23. These crimes not only expose men to the sword of the magistrate, (Lev. 20. 11.) but, which is more dreadful, to the wrath of God; bestiality likewise, v. 21.

5. Against the sixth commandment. Two of the worst kinds of murder are specified; (1.) Murder unseen, when a man does not set upon his neighbour as a fair adversary, giving him an opportunity to defend himself, but *smites him secretly*, (v. 24.) as by poison or otherwise, when he sees not who hurts him. See Ps. 10. 8, 9. Though such secret murders may go undiscovered, and unpunished, yet the curse of God will follow them. (2.) Murder under cover of law, which is of all other the greatest affront to God, for it makes an ordinance of his, to patronise the worst of villains; and the greatest wrong to our neighbour, for it ruins his honour as well as his life: cursed therefore is he that will be hired, or bribed, either to accuse, or to convict, or to condemn, and so *to slay an innocent person*, v. 25. See Ps. 15. 5.

6. The solemnity concludes with a general curse upon him *that confirmeth not*, or, as it might be read, *that performeth not, all the words of this law to do them*, v. 26. By our obedience to the law we set our seal to it, and so confirm it, as by our disobedience we do what lies in us to *disannul it*, Ps. 119. 126. The apostle, following all the ancient versions, reads it, *cursed is every one that continues not*, Gal. 3. 10. Lest those who were guilty of other sins not mentioned in this commination, should think themselves safe from the curse, this last reaches all; not only those who do the evil which the law forbids, but those also who omit the good which the law requires: to this we must all say *Amen*, owning ourselves under the curse, justly to have deserved it, and that we must certainly have perished for ever under it, if Christ had not *redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us*.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

This chapter is a very large exposition of two words in the foregoing chapter, the blessing and the curse. Those were pronounced blessed in general, that were obedient, and those cursed, that were disobedient; but because generals are not so affecting, Moses here descends to particulars, and describes the blessing and the curse, not in their fountains, (those are out of sight, and therefore the most considerable, yet least considered, the favour of God the spring of all the blessings, and the wrath of God the spring of all the curses,) but in their streams, the sensible effects of the blessing and the curse, for they are real things, and have real effects. 1. He describes the blessings that should come upon them if they were obedient; personal, family, and especially national, for in that capacity especially they are here treated with, v. 1..14. 2. He more largely describes the curses which would come upon them if they were disobedient; such as would be, 1. Their extreme vexation, v. 15..44. 2. Their utter ruin and destruction at last, v. 45..68. This chapter is much to the same purport with Lev. 26. setting before them life and death, good and evil; and the promise, in the close of that chapter, of their restoration upon their repentance, is here likewise more largely repeated, ch. 30. Thus as they had precept upon precept in the repetition of the law, so they had line upon line in the repetition of the promises and threatenings. And these are both there and here delivered, not only as sanctions of the law, what would be conditionally, but as predictions of the event, what would be certainly, that for a while the people of Israel would be happy in their obedience, but that at length they would be undone by their disobedience; and therefore it is said (ch. 30. 1.) that all those things would come upon them, both the blessing and the curse.

1. **AND** it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2. And all these blessings shall

come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. 3. Blessed shalt thou be in the city and blessed shalt thou be in the field. 4. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 5. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. 6. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 7. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. 8. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 9. The LORD shall establish thee a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. 10. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. 11. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. 12. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. 13. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: 14. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

The blessings are here put before the curses, to intimate, 1. That God is slow to anger, but swift to show mercy: he has said it, and sworn, that he would much rather we would obey and live, than sin and die. It is his delight to bless. 2. That though both the promises and the threatenings are designed to bring and hold us to our duty; yet it is better that we be allured to that which is good by a filial hope of God's favour, than that we be frightened to it by a servile fear of his wrath. That obedience pleases best, which comes from a principle of delight in God's goodness. Now,

1. We have here the condition upon which the blessing is promised. 1. It is upon condition that they *diligently hearken to the voice of God*; (v. 1, 2.) that they hear God speaking to them by his word, and use their utmost endeavour to acquaint



themselves with his will, v. 13. 2. Upon condition that they *observe and do all his commandments*, (and in order to obedience, there is need of observation,) and that they *keep the commandments of God*, (v. 9.) and *walk in his ways*. Not only do them for once, but keep them for ever; not only set out in his ways, but walk in them to the end. 3. Upon condition that they should not *go aside either to the right hand or to the left*, either to superstition on the one hand, or profaneness on the other; and particularly that they should not go after other gods, (v. 14.) which was the sin that of all others they were most prone to, and God would be most displeased with. Let them take care to keep up religion, both the form and power of it, in their families and nation, and God would not fail to bless them.

II. The particulars of this blessing.

1. It is promised that the providence of God should prosper them in all their outward concerns. These blessings are said to *overtake them*, v. 2. Good people, sometimes, under the sense of their own unworthiness, are ready to fly from the blessing, and to conclude that it belongs not to them; but the blessing shall find them out and follow them notwithstanding; thus in the great day, the blessing will overtake the righteous that say, *Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee?* Matth. 25. 37. It is promised,

(1.) That they should be safe and easy; a blessing should come upon them wherever they were, *in the city, or in the field*, v. 3. Whether their habitation was in the town or country; whether they were husbandmen or tradesmen; whether their business called them into the city or into the field; they should be preserved from the dangers, and have the comforts, of every scene. This blessing should attend them in their journeys, going out and coming in, v. 6. Their persons should be protected, and the affair they went about, should succeed well. Observe, here, what a necessary and constant dependence we have upon God, both for the continuance and comfort of this life. We need him at every turn, in all the various moments of life; we cannot be safe if he withdraw his protection, nor easy if he suspend his favour; but if he bless us, go where we will, it is well with us.

(2.) That their families should be built up in a numerous issue; *Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body*, (v. 4.) and in that the Lord shall *make thee plenteous*, (v. 11.) in pursuance of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be *as the stars of heaven* for multitude, and that God would be a God to them, than which, a greater blessing, and more comprehensive, could not be entailed upon the fruit of their body. See Isa. 61. 9.

(3.) That they should be rich, and have an abundance of all the good things of this life, which are promised them, not merely that they might have the pleasure of enjoying them, but (as Bishop Patrick observes out of one of the Jewish writers) that they might have wherewithal to honour God, and might be helped and encouraged to serve him cheerfully, and to proceed and persevere in their obedience to him. A blessing is promised, [1.] On all they had without doors, corn and cattle in the field, (v. 4, 11.) their cows and sheep particularly, which should be blessed for the owners' sakes, and made blessings to them. In order to this, it is promised that God would give them *rain in due season*, which is called, his *good treasure*, (v. 12.) because with this *river of God the earth is enriched*, Ps. 65. 9. Our constant supplies we must see coming from God's good treasure, and own our obligations to him for them; if he withhold his rain, the fruits both of the ground and of the cattle soon perish. [2.] On all they had within doors, the basket and store, (v. 5.) the store-

houses or barns, v. 8. When it is brought home, God will bless it, and not blow upon it as sometimes he does, Hag. 1. 6, 9. We depend upon God and his blessing, not only for our yearly corn out of the field, but for our daily bread out of our basket and store, and therefore are taught to pray for it every day.

(4.) That they should have success in all their employments, which would be a constant satisfaction to them; *"The Lord shall command the blessing"* (and it is he only that can command it) upon thee, not only in all thou hast, but in all thou doest, *all that thou settest thine hand unto*, v. 8. This intimated that even when they were rich, they must not be idle, but must find some good employment or other to set their hand to, and God would own their industry, and *bless the work of their hand*; (v. 12.) for that which *makes rich*, and keeps so, is, the *blessing of the Lord upon the hand of the diligent*, Prov. 10. 4, 22.

(5.) That they should have honour among their neighbours, v. 1, *The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations*. He made them so, by taking them into covenant with himself, ch. 26. 19. And he would make them more and more so by their outward prosperity, if they would not by sin disparage themselves. Two things should help to make them great among the nations. [1.] Their wealth, v. 12. *"Thou shalt lend to many nations upon interest"*, (which they were allowed to take from the neighbouring nations,) *"but thou shalt not have occasion to borrow"*. This would give them great influence with all about them: for the borrower is servant to the lender. It may be meant of trade and commerce, that they should export abundantly more than they should import, which would keep the balance on their side. [2.] Their power, v. 13. *"The Lord shall make thee the head"*, to give law to all about them, to exact tribute, and to arbitrate all controversies. Every sheaf should bow to their's; which should make them so considerable, that *all the people of the earth should be afraid of them*, (v. 10.) that is, should reverence their true grandeur, and dread making them their enemies. The flourishing of religion among them, and the blessing of God upon them, would make them formidable to all their neighbours, terrible as an army with banners.

(6.) That they should be victorious over their enemies, and prosper in all their wars. If any were so daring as to rise up against them to oppress them, or encroach upon them, it should be at their peril, they should certainly fall before them, v. 7. The forces of the enemy, though entirely drawn up to come against them one way, should be entirely routed, and flee before them seven ways, each making the best of his way.

From the whole we learn, (though it were well if men would believe it,) that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. Though temporal blessings do not take up so much room in the promises of the New Testament, as they do in those of the Old, yet it is enough that our Lord Jesus has given us his word, (and sure we may take his word,) that if we *seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, all other things shall be added to us, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good; and who can desire it further? Matth. 6. 33.

2. It is likewise promised that the grace of God should *establish them a holy people*, v. 9. Having taken them into covenant with himself, he would keep them in covenant; and provided they used the means of steadfastness, he would give them the grace of steadfastness, that they should not depart from him. Note, Those that are sincere in holiness, God will establish in holiness; and he is of power to do it, Rom. 16. 25. He that is holy, shall

be holy still; and those whom God establishes in holiness, he thereby establishes a people to himself, for as long as we keep close to God, he will never forsake us. *This establishment of their religion would be the establishment of their reputation, v. 10. All the people of the earth shall see, and own, that thou art called by the name of the Lord,* that is, "that thou art a most excellent and glorious people, under the particular care and countenance of the great God. They shall be made to know that a people called by the name of *Jehovah* is without doubt the happiest people under the sun, even their enemies themselves being judges." The favourites of heaven are truly great, and, first or last, it will be made to appear that they are so; if not in this world, yet at that day, when those who confess Christ now, shall be confessed by him before men and angels, as those whom he delights to honour.

15. But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. 16. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. 17. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. 18. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 19. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 20. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. 21. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. 22. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. 23. And the heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. 24. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 25. The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 26. And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. 27. The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the em-  
rods and with the scab, and with the itch,

whereof thou canst not be healed. 28. The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: 29. And thou shalt grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. 30. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. 31. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them. 32. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long; and there shall be no might in thine hand. 33. The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be openly oppressed and crushed always: 34. So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. 35. The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head. 36. The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. 37. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee. 38. Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. 39. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shall neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. 40. Thou shalt have olive-trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit. 41. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity. 42. All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume. 43. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. 44. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

Having viewed the bright side of the cloud, which is toward the obedient, we have now presented to

us the black and dark side, which is toward the disobedient. If we do not keep God's commandments, we not only come short of the blessing promised, but we lay ourselves under the curse, which is as comprehensive of all misery, as the blessing is of all happiness. Observe,

I. The equity of this curse. It is not a curse causeless, or for some light cause; God seeks not occasion against us, nor is he apt to quarrel with us. That which is here mentioned as bringing the curse, is, 1. Despising God; refusing to *hearken to his voice*; (v. 15.) which speaks the highest contempt imaginable, as if what he had said were not worth the heeding, or we were not under any obligation to him. 2. Disobeying him; *not doing his commandments*, or not observing to do them. None fall under his curse, but those that rebel against his command. 3. Deserting him. "It is because of the wickedness of thy doings, not only whereby thou hast slighted me, but *whereby thou hast forsaken me*," v. 20. God never casts us off, till we first cast him off. It intimates that their idolatry, by which they forsook the true God for false gods, would be their destroying sin, more than any other.

II. The extent and efficacy of this curse. "These curses shall come upon thee from above, and shall overtake thee; though thou endeavour to escape them, it is to no purpose to attempt it, they shall follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and seize thee, overtake thee, and overcome thee," v. 15. It is said of the sinner, when God's wrath is in pursuit of him, that he *would fain flee out of his hand*, (Job. 27. 22.) but he cannot; if he *flee from the iron weapon*, yet the *bow of steel* shall reach him and *strike him through*. There is no running from God but by running to him, no fleeing from his justice but by fleeing to his mercy. See Ps. 21. 7, 8. 1. Wherever the sinner goes, the curse of God follows him; wherever he is, it rests upon him. He is cursed in the city, and in the field, v. 16. The strength of the city cannot shelter him from it, the pleasant air of the country is no fence against these pestilential steams. He is cursed, (v. 19.) when he comes in, for the curse is *upon the house of the wicked*, (Prov. 3. 33.) and he is cursed when he goes out, for he cannot leave that curse behind him, nor get rid of it, which has entered into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. 2. Whatever he has, is under a curse. *Cursed is the ground for his sake*, and all that is on it, or comes out of it, and so he is cursed from the ground, as Cain, Gen. 4. 11. The *basket and store* cursed, v. 17, 18. All his enjoyments being forfeited by him, are in a manner forbidden to him, as cursed things, which he has no title to. To those whose *mind and conscience are defiled*, every thing else is so, Tit. 1. 15. They are all imbittered to him, he cannot take any true comfort in them, for the wrath of God mixes itself with them, and he is so far from having any security of the continuance of them, that if his eyes be open, he may see them all condemned, and ready to be confiscated, and with them all his joys, and all his hopes, for ever. 3. Whatever he does, is under a curse too. It is a curse in all that he *setteth his hand unto*, v. 20. A constant disappointment which they are subject to, that set their hearts upon the world, and expect their happiness in it, and which cannot but be a constant vexation. This curse here is just the reverse of the blessing in the former part of the chapter. Thus whatever bliss there is in heaven, there is not only the want of it, but the contrary to it, in hell; (Isa. 65. 13.) *My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry*.

Many particular judgments are here enumerated, which would be the fruits of the curse, and with which God would punish the people of the Jews for their apostasy and disobedience. (1.) These judg-

ments threatened are of divers kinds, for God has many arrows in his quiver, *four sore judgments*, (Ezek. 14. 21.) and many more. (2.) They are here represented as very terrible, and the descriptions of them are exceedingly lively and affecting, that men, knowing these terrors of the Lord, might, if possible, be persuaded. (3.) The threatenings of the same judgment are several times repeated, that they might make the more deep and lasting impressions; and to intimate that if they persisted in their disobedience, the judgment which they thought was over, and of which they said, "Surely the bitterness of it is past," would return with double force; for when God judges, he will overcome.

[1.] Bodily diseases are here threatened; that they should be epidemical in their land. These God sometimes makes use of for the chastisement and improvement of his own people, *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*. But here they are threatened to be brought upon his enemies, as tokens of his wrath, and designed for their ruin. So that according to the temper of our spirits, under sickness, accordingly it is to us a blessing or a curse. But whatever sickness may be to particular persons, it is certain that epidemical diseases raging among a people, are national judgments, and are so to be accounted. He here threatens, *First*, Painful diseases; (v. 35.) a sore botch, beginning in the legs and knees, but spreading, like Job's boils, from head to foot. And, *Secondly*, Shameful diseases; (v. 27.) the botch of Egypt, (such boils and blains as the Egyptians had been plagued with, when God brought Israel from among them,) and the emerods and scab, vile diseases, the just punishment of those who by sin had made themselves vile. *Thirdly*, Mortal diseases; the pestilence, (v. 21.) the consumption, (put for all chronic diseases,) and the fever, (for all acute diseases,) v. 22. See Lev. 26. 16. and all incurable, v. 27.

[2.] Famine, and scarcity of provisions; and this, *First*, For want of rain; (v. 23, 24.) *Thy heaven over thy head*, that part that is over thy land, *shall be as dry as brass*, while the heavens over other countries shall distil their dews; and when the heaven is *as brass*, the earth of course will be *as iron*, so hard and unfruitful. Instead of rain, the dust shall be blown out of the highways into the field, and spoil the little that there is of the fruits of the earth. *Secondly*, By destroying insects. The locust should destroy the corn, so they should not have so much as their *seed again*, v. 38, 42. And the fruit of the vine which should make glad their hearts, should all be worm-eaten, v. 39. And the olive; some way or other, should be made to *cast its fruit*, v. 40. The heathen use many superstitious customs in honour of their idol-gods, for preserving the fruits of the earth: but Moses tells Israel that the only way they had to preserve them, was, to keep God's commandments; for he is a God that will not be sported with, like their idols, but will be served in spirit and truth. This threatening we find fulfilled in Israel, 1 Kings 17. 1 Jer. 14. 1, &c. Joel 1. 4.

[3.] That they should be smitten before their enemies in war, who, it is likely, would be the more cruel to them, when they had them at their mercy, for the severity they had used against the nations of Canaan, which their neighbours in after-ages would be apt to remember against them, v. 25. It would make their flight the more shameful, and the more grievous, that they might have triumphed over their enemies, if they had but been faithful to their God. The carcasses of those that were slain in war, or died in captivity among strangers, should be *meat to the fowls*, v. 26. And an Israelite, having forfeited the favour of his God, should have so little humanity showed him, as that *no man should fray*

them away; so odious would God's curse make them to all mankind.

[4.] That they should be infatuated in all their counsels, so as not to discern their own interest, nor bring any thing to pass for the public good, (v. 28, 29.) *The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness.* Note, God's judgments can reach the minds of men, to fill them with darkness and horror, as well as their bodies and estates; and those are the sorest of all judgments, which make men a terror to themselves, and their own destroyers. That which they contrived to secure themselves by, should still turn to their prejudice. Thus we often find that the allies they confided in, *distressed them, and strengthened them not*, 2 Chron. 28. 20. Those that will not walk in God's counsels, are justly left to be ruined by their own; and those that are wilfully blind to their duty, deserve to be made blind to their interest; and seeing they *loved darkness rather than light*, let them *grope at noon-day* as in the dark.

[5.] That they should be plundered of all their enjoyments, stripped of all by the proud and imperious conqueror, such as Benhadad was to Ahab, 1 Kings 20. 5, 6. Not only their houses and vineyards should be taken from them, but their wives and children, v. 30, 32. Their dearest comforts, which they took most pleasure in, and promised themselves most from, should be the entertainment and triumph of their enemies. As they had dwelt in houses which they builded not, and eaten of vineyards which they planted not, (ch. 6, 10, 11.) so others should do by them. Their oxen, asses, and sheep, like Jacob's, should be taken away before their eyes, and they should not be able to recover them, v. 31. And all the fruit of their land and labours should be devoured and eaten up by the enemy; so that they, and their's, would want necessities, while their enemies were revelling with that which they had laboured for.

[6.] That they should be carried captives into a far country; nay, into *all the kingdoms of the earth*, v. 25. Their sons and daughters, whom they promised themselves comfort in, should go into captivity, (v. 41.) and they themselves at length, and their king in whom they promised themselves safety and settlement, v. 36. This was fully accomplished, when the ten tribes first, were carried captive into Assyria, (2 Kings 17. 6.) and not long after, the two tribes into Babylon, and two of their kings, 2 Kings 24. 14, 15.—25. 7, 21. That which is mentioned as an aggravation of their captivity, is, that they should go into an unknown country, the language and customs of which would be very uncouth, and their treatment among them barbarous, and there they should *serve other gods*, that is, be compelled to do so by their enemies, as they were in Babylon, Dan. 3. 6. Note, God often makes men's sin their punishment, and chooses their delusions. Ye shall *serve other gods*, that is, "Ye shall serve those that do serve them;" a nation is often in scripture called by the name of its God, as Jer. 48. 7. They had made idolaters their associates, and now God made idolaters their oppressors.

[7.] That those who remained, should be insulted and tyrannized over by strangers, v. 43, 44. So the ten tribes were by the colonies which the king of Assyria sent to take possession of their land, 2 Kings 17. 24. Or, this may be meant of the gradual encroachments which the strangers within their gates should make upon them, so as insensibly to worm them out of their estates. We read of the fulfilling of this, Hos. 7. 9. *Strangers have devoured his strength*; foreigners ate the bread out of the mouths of true-born Israelites, by which they were justly chastised for introducing strange gods.

[8.] That their reputation among their neigh-

bours should be quite sunk, and they that had been a name, and a praise, should be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, v. 37. Some have observed the fulfilling of this threatening in their present state; for when we would express the most perfidious and barbarous treatment, we say, *None but a Jew would have done so*. Thus is sin a reproach to any people.

*Lastly*, To complete their misery, it is threatened that they should be quite out of the possession of their minds by all these troubles; (v. 34.) *Thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes*, that is, quite bereaved of all comfort and hope, and abandoned to utter despair. Those that walk by sight, and not by faith, are in danger of losing reason itself, when every thing about them looks frightful; and their condition is woful indeed, that are *mad for the sight of their eyes*.

45. Moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee:

46. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. 47. Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; 48. Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. 49. The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; 50. A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: 51. And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which *also* shall not leave thee *either* corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. 52. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. 53. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: 54. So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: 55. So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children:

whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. 56. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, 57. And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all *things* secretly in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. 58. If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, **THE LORD THY GOD**; 59. Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, *even* great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. 60. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. 61. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, they will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 62. And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. 63. And it shall come to pass, *that*, as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to naught; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. 64. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone. 65. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: 66. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: 67. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. 68. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again

with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy *you*.

One would have thought that enough had been said to press them with a dread of that *wrath of God* which is *revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. But to show how deep the treasures of that wrath are, and that still there is more and worse behind, Moses, when one would have thought that he had concluded this dismal subject, begins again, and adds to this roll of curses, many similar words; as Jeremiah did to his, Jer. 36. 32. It should seem that in the former part of his commination, Moses foretells their captivity in Babylon, and the calamities which introduced and attended that, by which, even after their return, they were brought to that low and poor condition, which is described, v. 44. That their enemies should be *the head*, and they *the tail*: but here in this latter part, he foretells their last destruction by the Romans, and their dispersion thereupon. And the present deplorable state of the Jewish nation, and of all that have incorporated themselves with them, by embracing their religion, does so fully and exactly answer to the prediction in these verses, that it serves for an incontestable proof of the truth of prophecy, and consequently of the divine authority of the scripture. And this last destruction being here represented as more dreadful than the former, it shows that their sin, in rejecting Christ and his gospel, was more heinous and more provoking to God than idolatry itself, and left them more under the power of Satan; for their captivity in Babylon cured them effectually of their idolatry in seventy years' time; but under this last destruction now for above 1600 years, they continue incurably averse to the Lord Jesus. Observe,

I. What is here said in general of the wrath of God, which should light and lie upon them for their sins.

1. That if they would not be *ruled by the commands of God*, they should certainly be *ruined by his curse*, v. 45, 46. Because thou didst not *keep his commandments*, (especially that of hearing and obeying the great Prophet,) *these curses shall come upon thee*, as upon a people appointed to destruction, the generation of God's wrath: and they shall be *for a sign* and *for a wonder*. It is amazing to think, that a people so long the favourites of Heaven, should be so perfectly abandoned and cast off; that a people so closely incorporated, should be so universally dispersed; and yet that a people so scattered in all nations, should preserve themselves distinct, and not mix with any; but like Cain, be fugitives and vagabonds, and yet marked to be known.

2. That if they would not *serve God with cheerfulness*, they should be compelled to *serve their enemies*, (v. 47, 48.) that they might know the difference; (2 Chron. 12. 8.) which, some think, is the meaning of Ezek. 20. 24, 25, *Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good*. Observe here, (1.) It is justly expected from those to whom God gives an abundance of the good things of this life, that they should serve him. What does he maintain us for, but that we may do his work, and be some way serviceable to his honour? (2.) The more God gives us, the more cheerfully we should serve him; our abundance should be oil to the wheels of our obedience. God is a master that will be served with gladness, and delights to hear us sing at our work. (3.) If when we receive the gifts of God's bounty, we either do

not serve him at all, or serve him with reluctance, it is a righteous thing with him to make us know the hardships of want and servitude. They deserve to have cause given them to complain, who complain without a cause. *Tristis es, et felix—happy, and yet not easy!* Blush at thy own folly and ingratitude.

3. That if they would not *give glory to God* by an awful obedience, he would get him *honour upon them by wonderful plagues*, v. 58, 59. Note, (1.) God justly expects from us that we should fear his fearful name; and, which is strange, that name which is here proposed as the object of our fear, is, **THE LORD THY GOD**, which is very fitly here put in our Bibles, in capital letters; for nothing can sound more truly august. As nothing is more comfortable, so nothing more awful, than this, that he with whom we have to do, is Jehovah, a Being infinitely perfect and blessed, and the Author of all being; and that he is our God, our rightful Lord and Owner, from whom we are to receive laws, and to whom we are to give account: this is great, and greatly to be feared. (2.) We may justly expect from God, that if we do not fear his fearful name, we shall feel his fearful plagues; for one way or other God will be feared. All God's plagues are dreadful, but some are wonderful, carrying in them extraordinary signatures of divine power and justice, so that a man, upon the first view of them, may say, *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

II. How the destruction threatened is described. Moses is here upon the same melancholy subject that our Saviour is discoursing of to his disciples in his farewell sermon, (Matth. 24.) namely, The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

Five things are here foretold, as steps to their ruin.

1. That they should be invaded by a foreign enemy; (v. 49, 50.) *A nation from far*, namely, the Romans, *as swift as the eagle*, hastening to the prey; our Saviour makes use of this similitude, in foretelling this destruction, that *where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together*, Matth. 24. 28. And Bishop Patrick observes, (to make the accomplishment the more remarkable,) that the ensign of the Roman armies was an eagle. This nation is said to be of a fierce countenance, an indication of a fierce nature, stern and severe, that would not pity the weakness and infirmity either of little children or of old people.

2. That the *country should be laid waste*, and all the fruits of it eaten up by this army of foreigners; which is the natural consequence of an invasion, especially when it is made, as that by the Romans was, for the chastisement of rebels, v. 51. *He shall eat the fruits of thy cattle and land*, so that the inhabitants should be starved, while the invaders were fed to the full.

3. That their cities should be besieged, and that such would be the obstinacy of the besieged, and such the vigour of the besiegers, that they would be reduced to the last extremity, and at length fall into the hands of the enemy, v. 52. No place, though ever so well fortified, no, not Jerusalem itself, though it held out long, would escape. Two of the common consequences of a long siege are here foretold. (1.) A miserable famine, which would prevail to such a degree, that, for want of food, they should *kill and eat their own children*, v. 53. Men should do so, notwithstanding their hardness and ability to bear hunger; and though obliged by the law of nature to provide for their own families, yet should refuse to give to the wife and children that were starving, any of the child that was barbarously butchered, v. 54, 55. Nay, women, ladies of quality, notwithstanding their

natural niceness about their food, and their natural affection to their children, yet, for want of food, should so far forget all humanity, as to kill and eat them, v. 56, 57. Let us observe by the way, how hard this fate must needs be to the tender and delicate women, and learn not to indulge ourselves in tenderness and delicacy, because we know not what we may be reduced to before we die; the more nice we are, the harder it will be to us to bear want, and the more danger we shall be in of sacrificing reason, and religion, and natural affection itself, to the clamours of an unmortified and ungoverned appetite. This threatening was fulfilled in the letter of it, more than once, to the perpetual reproach of the Jewish nation: never was the like done either by Greek or Barbarian, but in the siege of Samaria, a woman *boiled her own son*, 2 Kings 6. 28, 29. And it is spoken of as commonly done among them in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, Lam. 4. 10. And in the last siege by the Romans, Josephus tells us of a noble woman that killed and ate her own child, through the extremity of the famine, and when she had eaten one half secretly, (v. 57.) that she might have it to herself, the mob, smelling meat, got into the house, to whom she showed the other half, which she had kept till another time, inviting them to share with her. What is too barbarous for them to do, that are abandoned of God! (2.) Sickness is another common effect of a strait and long siege; and that is here threatened: *sore sickness, and of long continuance*, v. 59. These should attend the Jews wherever they went afterward, the diseases of Egypt, leprosies, botches, and foul ulcers, v. 60. Nay, as if the particular miseries here threatened were not enough, he concludes with an &c. v. 61. The Lord will bring upon thee every sickness, and every plague, though it be *not written in the book of this law*. Those that fall under the curse of God, will find that the one half was not told them of the weight and terror of that curse.

4. That multitudes of them should perish; so that they should become *few in number*, v. 62. It was a nation that God had wonderfully increased, so that they were *as the stars of heaven for multitude*; but, for their sin, *diminished and brought low*, Ps. 107. 38, 39. It is computed that in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, as appears by the account Josephus gives of it, above two millions fell by the sword, at several places, beside what perished by famine and pestilence: so that the whole country was laid waste and turned into a wilderness. That is a terrible word, (v. 63.) *As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, so he will rejoice over you to destroy you*. Behold here the *goodness and severity of God*: mercy here shines bright in the pleasure God takes in doing good, he rejoices in it; yet justice here appears no less illustrious in the pleasure he takes in destroying the impenitent; not as it is the making of his creatures miserable, but as it is the asserting of his own honour, and the securing of the ends of his government. See what a malignant mischievous thing sin is, which (as I may say) makes it necessary for the God of infinite goodness to rejoice in the destruction of his own creatures, even those that had been favourites.

5. That the remnant should be scattered throughout the nations. This completes their woe, (v. 64.) *The Lord shall scatter thee among all people*. This is remarkably fulfilled in their present dispersion, for there are Jews to be found almost in all countries that are possessed either by Christians or Mahomedans, and in such numbers, that it has been said, If they could unite in one common interest, they would be a very formidable body, and able to deal with the most powerful states and princes; but they abide under the power of this curse, and are so scattered that they are not able to incorporate. It is here



foretold, that in this dispersion, (1.) They should have no religion, or none to any purpose; should have neither temple, nor altar, nor priesthood, for they should *serve other gods*. Some think this has been fulfilled in the force put upon the Jews in Popish countries, to worship the images that are used in the Roman church, to their great vexation. (2.) They should have no rest; no rest of body, *The sole of thy foot shall not have rest*, (v. 65.) but be continually on the remove, either in hope of gain, or fear of persecution; all wandering Jews: no rest of the mind, (which is much worse,) but a *trembling heart*; (v. 65.) *no assurance of life*; (v. 66.) weary both of light and darkness, which are, in their turns, both welcome to a quiet mind, but to them both day and night would be a terror, v. 67. Such was once the condition of Job, (Job 7. 4.) but to them this should be constant and perpetual; that blindness and darkness which the apostle speaks of as having happened to Israel, and that guilt which *bowed down their back alway*, (Rom. 11. 8. 10.) must needs occasion a constant restlessness and amazement. Those are a torment to themselves, and to all about them, that fear day and night, and are always uneasy; let good people strive against it, and not give way to that fear which has torment; and let wicked people not be secured in their wickedness, for their hearts cannot endure, nor can their hands be strong, when the terrors of God set themselves in array against them. They that say *in the morning, O that it were even*, and *in the evening, O that it were morning*, show, [1.] A constant fret and vexation, chiding the hours for lingering, and complaining of the length of every minute. Let time be precious to us when we are in prosperity, and then it will not be so tedious to us when we are in afflictions as otherwise it would. [2.] A constant fright and terror; afraid in the morning of the *arrow that flieth by day*, and therefore wishing the day over; but what will this do for them? When evening comes, the trembling heart is no less apprehensive of the *terror by night*, Ps. 91. 5. 6. Happy they, whose minds, being staid on God, are *quiet from the fear of evil*. Observe here, the terror arises not only from the sight of the eyes, but from the fear of the heart, not only from real dangers, but from imaginary ones; the causes of fear, when they come to be inquired into, often prove to be only the creatures of the fancy.

*Lastly*, In the close, God threatens to leave them as he found them, in a *house of bondage*, v. 68. *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again*, that is, into such a miserable state as they were in when they were slaves to the Egyptians, and ruled by them with rigour. God had brought them out of Egypt, and had said, *They shall see it no more again*; (Deut. 17. 16.) but now they should be reduced to the same state of slavery that they had been in there. To be sold to strangers would be bad enough, but much worse to be sold to their enemies. Even slaves may be valued as such, but a Jew should have so ill a name for all that is base, that when he was exposed to sale, no man should buy him, which would make his master that had him to sell, the more severe with him. Thirty Jews (they say) have been sold for one small piece of money, as they sold our Saviour for thirty pieces.

Now, upon the whole matter, *First*, The accomplishment of these predictions upon the Jewish nation, shows that Moses spake by the spirit of God, who certainly foresees the ruin of sinners, and gives them warning of it, that they may prevent it by a true and timely repentance, or else be left inexcusable. *Secondly*, Let us all from hence learn to stand in awe, and not to sin. I have heard of a wicked man, who, upon reading the threatenings of this chapter, was so enraged, that he tore the leaf out of the Bible, as Jehoiakim cut Jeremiah's roll;

but to what purpose is it to deface a copy, while the original remains upon record in the divine counsels, by which it is unalterably determined, that *the wages of sin is death*, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear?

## CHAP. XXIX.

The first words of this chapter are the contents of it; *These are the words of the covenant*, (v. 1.) that is, these that follow; Here is, 1. A recital of God's dealings with them, in order to the bringing of them into this covenant, v. 2. . 8. II. A solemn charge to them to keep the covenant, v. 9. III. An abstract of the covenant itself, v. 12, 13. IV. A specification of the persons taken into the covenant, v. 10, 11, 14, 15. V. An intimation of the great design of this covenant against idolatry, in a parenthesis, v. 16, 17. VI. A most solemn and dreadful denunciation of the wrath of God, against such persons as promise themselves peace in a sinful way, v. 18. . 28. VII. The conclusion of this treaty, with a distinction between things secret and things revealed, v. 29.

1. **T**HESE are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. 2. And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; 3. The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: 4. Yet the LORD hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. 5. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. 6. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I *am* the LORD your God. 7. And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them: 8. And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. 9. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

Now that Moses had largely repeated the commands which the people were to observe as their part of the covenant, and the promises and threatenings which God would make good (according as they behaved themselves) as his part of the covenant; the whole is here summed up in a federal transaction. The covenant formerly made is here renewed, and Moses, who was before, is still, the mediator of it: (v. 1.) *The Lord commanded Moses to make it*. Moses himself, though king in Jeshurun, could not make the covenant any other wise than as God gave him instructions. It does not lie in the power of ministers to fix the terms of the covenant, they are only to dispense the seals of it. This is said to be *beside the covenant made in Horeb*; for though the covenant was the same, yet it was a new promulgation and ratification of it. It is probable, some now living, though not of age to be mustered, were of age to consent for themselves

to the covenant made at Horeb, and yet it is here renewed. Note, Those that have solemnly covenanted with God, should take all opportunities to do it again, as those that like their choice too well to change. But the far greater part were a new generation, and therefore the covenant must be made afresh with them, and it is fit that the covenant should be renewed to the children of the covenant.

It is usual for indentures to begin with a recital; this does so; with a rehearsal of the great things God had done for them. 1. As an encouragement to them, to believe that God would indeed be to them a God, for he would not have done so much for them, if he had not designed more, to which all he had hitherto done, was but a preface (as it were) or introduction; nay, he had showed himself a God in what he had hitherto done for them, which might raise their expectations of something great, and answering the vast extent and compass of that pregnant promise, that God would be to them a God. 2. As an engagement upon them to be to him an obedient people, in consideration of what he had done for them.

For the proof of what he here advances, he appeals to their own eyes, (v. 2.) *Ye have seen all that the Lord did.* Their own senses were incontestable evidence of the matter of fact, that God had done great things for them; and then their own reason was a no less competent judge of the equity of his inference from it, (v. 9.) *Keep therefore the words of this covenant.*

These things he specifies, to show the power and goodness of God in his appearances for them. (1.) Their deliverance out of Egypt, v. 2, 3. The amazing signs and miracles by which Pharaoh was plagued, and compelled to dismiss them, and Israel was tried (for they are called *temptations*) whether they would trust God to secure them from, and save them by, those plagues. (2.) Their conduct through the wilderness for forty years, v. 5, 6. There they were led, and clad, and fed, by miracles; though the paths of the wilderness were not only unknown but untrodden, yet God kept them from being lost there; and (as Bishop Patrick observes) those very shoes, which by the appointment of God they put on in Egypt, at the passover, when they were ready to march, (Exod. 12. 11.) never wore out, but served them to Canaan: and though they lived not upon bread which strengthens the heart, and wine which rejoices it, but upon manna and rock-water; yet they were men of strength and courage, mighty men, and able to go forth to war. By these miracles they were made to know that the Lord was God, and by these mercies that he was their God. (3.) The victory they had lately obtained over Sihon and Og, and that good land which they had taken possession of, v. 7, 8. Both former mercies, and fresh mercies, should be improved by us as inducements to obedience.

By way of inference from these memoirs, [1.] Moses laments their stupidity, (v. 4.) *Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive.* This does not lay the blame of our senselessness, and sottishness, and unbelief, upon God, as if they had stood ready to receive his grace, and had begged for it, but he had denied them; no, but it fastens the guilt upon themselves. "The Lord, who is the Father of Spirits, a God in covenant with you, and who had always been so rich in mercy to you, no doubt, would have crowned all his other gifts with this, he would have given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see, if you had not by your own forwardness and perverseness frustrated his kind intentions, and received his grace in vain." Note, First, The hearing ear, and seeing eye, and the understanding heart, are the gift of God. All that

have them, have them from him. *Secondly*, God gives not only food and raiment, but wealth and large possessions, to many to whom he does not give grace. Many enjoy the gifts, who have not hearts to perceive the Giver, nor the true intention and use of the gifts. *Thirdly*, God's readiness to do us good in other things, is a plain evidence that if we have not grace, that best of gifts, it is our own fault and not his; he would have gathered us, and we would not. [2.] Moses charges them to be obedient, (v. 9.) *Keep therefore, and do.* Note, We are bound, in gratitude and interest, as well as duty and faithfulness, to *keep the words of the covenant.*

10. Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, 11. Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water; 12. That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: 13. That he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 14. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; 15. But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day: 16. (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; 17. And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them;) 18. Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; 19. And it came to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: 20. The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven 21. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law: 22. So that the generation to come of your children, that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say,

when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it; 23. *And that* the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, *and* burning, *that* it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath; 24. Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what *meaneth* the heat of this great anger? 25. Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: 26. For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and *whom* he had not given unto them: 27. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book: 28. And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it* is this day. 29. The secret *things* belong unto the LORD our God: but those *things* which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

It appears by the length of the sentences here, and by the copiousness and pungency of the expressions, that Moses, now that he was drawing near to the close of his discourse, was very warm and zealous, and very desirous to impress what he said, upon the minds of this unthinking people. To bind them the faster to God and duty, he here, with great solemnity of expression, (to make up the want of the external ceremony that was used, Exod. 24. 4, &c.) concludes a bargain (as it were) between them and God, an everlasting covenant, which God would not forget, and they must not. He requires not their explicit consent, but lays the matter plainly before them, and then leaves it between God and their own consciences. Observe,

I. The parties to this covenant.

1. It is the Lord their God they are to covenant with, v. 12. To him they must give up themselves, to him they must join themselves. "It is his oath; he has drawn up the covenant and settled it; he requires your consent to it; he has sworn to you, and to him you must be sworn." This requires us to be sincere and serious, humble and reverent, in our covenant-transactions with God, remembering how great a God he is, with whom we are covenanting, who has a perfect knowledge of us, and an absolute dominion over us.

2. They are all to be taken into covenant with him. They were all summoned to attend, (v. 2.) and did accordingly, and are told, (v. 10.) what was the design of their appearing before God now in a body—they were to enter into covenant with him. (1.) Even their great men; the captains of their tribes, their elders and officers, must not think it any disparagement to their honour, or any diminution of their power, to put their necks under the yoke of this covenant, and to draw in it. They must rather enter into the covenant, first, to set a good example

to their inferiors. (2.) Not the men only, out the wives and children, must come into this covenant; though they were not numbered, and mustered, yet they must be *joined to the Lord*, v. 11. Observe, Even little ones are capable of being taken into covenant with God, and are to be admitted with their parents. Little children, so little as to be carried in arms, must be brought to Christ, and shall be blessed by him, for *of such* was, and *is*, the kingdom of God. (3.) Not the men of Israel only, but the stranger that was in their camp, provided he was so far proselyted to their religion, as to renounce all false gods, was taken into this covenant with the God of Israel, forasmuch as he also, though a stranger, was to be looked upon in this matter as a *son of Abraham*, Luke 19. 9. This was an early indication of favour to the Gentiles, and of the kindness God had in store for them. (4.) Not the freemen only, but the hewers of wood, and drawers of water, the meanest drudge they had among them. Note, As none are too great to come under the bonds of the covenant, so none are too mean to inherit the blessings of the covenant. In Christ no difference is made between *bond and free*, Col. 3. 11. *Art thou called, being a servant? Care not for it*, 1 Cor. 7. 21. (5.) Not only those that were now present before God in this solemn assembly, but those also that were not here with them, were taken into covenant, v. 15, *As with him that standeth here with us*, (so Bishop Patrick thinks it should be rendered,) *so also with him that is not here with us this day*; that is, [1.] Those that tarried at home, were included; though detained either by sickness or necessary business, they must not therefore think themselves disengaged; no, every Israelite shares in the common blessings; they that tarry at home, divide the spoil, and therefore every Israelite must own himself bound by the consent of the representative body. They who cannot go up to the house of the Lord, must keep up a spiritual communion with those that do, and be present in spirit when they are absent in body. [2.] The generations to come are included. Nay, one of the Chaldee paraphrasts reads it, *All the generations that have been from the first days of the world, and all that shall arise to the end of the whole world, stand with us here this day*. And so, taking this covenant as a typical dispensation of the covenant of grace, it is a noble testimony to the Mediator of that covenant, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*.

II. The summary of this covenant; all the precepts and all the promises of the covenant, are included in the covenant-relation between God and them, v. 13. That they should be appointed, raised up, *established for a people to him*, to observe and obey him, to be devoted to him, and dependent on him, and that he should be to them a God, according to the tenor of the covenant made with their fathers, to make them holy, high, and happy. Their fathers are here named, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, as examples of piety, which those were to set themselves to imitate, who expected any benefit from the covenant made with them. Note, A due consideration of the relation we stand in to God as our God, and the obligation we lie under as a people to him, is enough to bring us to all the duties and all the comforts of covenant.

III. The principal design of the renewing of this covenant at this time, was, to fortify them against temptations to idolatry. Though other sins will be the sinner's ruin, yet this was the sin that was likely to be *their* ruin. Now concerning this, he shows,

1. The danger they were in of being tempted to it, v. 16, 17. "*Ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt*, a country addicted to idolatry; and it were well if there were not among you some re-

mains of the infection of that idolatry; we have *passed by other nations, the Edomites, Moabites, &c.* and have seen their abominations, and their idols, and some among you, it may be, have liked them too well, and still hanker after them, and would rather worship a wooden god that they can see, than an infinite Spirit whom they never saw." It is to be hoped that there were those among them, who, the more they saw of these abominations and idols, the more they hated them; but there were those that were smitten with the sight of them, saw the accursed things, and coveted them.

2. The danger they were in if they yielded to the temptation. He gives them fair warning: it was at their peril if they forsook God to serve idols. If they would not be bound and held by the precepts of the covenant, they would find that the curses of the covenant would be strong enough to bind and hold them.

(1.) *Idolatry would be the ruin of particular persons and their families, v. 18-21.* where observe,

[1.] The sinner described, v. 18. *First*, He is one whose heart turns away from his God; there the mischief begins, in the evil heart of unbelief, which inclines men to depart from the living God, to dead idols. Even to this sin men are tempted, when they are drawn aside by their own lusts and fancies. They that begin to turn from God, by neglecting their duty to him, are easily drawn to other gods; and they that serve other gods, do certainly turn away from the true God; for he will admit of no rivals; he will be all or nothing. *Secondly*, He is a root that bears gall and wormwood; that is, he is a dangerous man, who, being himself poisoned with bad principles and inclinations, with a secret contempt of the God of Israel and his institutions, and a veneration for the gods of the nations, endeavours, by all arts possible, to corrupt and poison others, and draw them to idolatry: this is a man whose fruit is *hemlock* (so the word is translated, Hos. 10. 4.) and *wormwood*; it is very displeasing to God, and will be, to all that are seduced by him, *bitterness in the latter end*. This is referred to by the apostle, Heb. 12. 15. where he is in like manner cautioning us to take heed of those that would seduce us from the christian faith; they are the weeds or tares in a field, which, if let alone, will overspread the whole field. A little of this leaven will be in danger of infecting the whole lump.

[2.] His security in the sin. He promises himself impunity, though he persists in his impiety, v. 19. Though he *hears the words of the curse*, so that he cannot plead ignorance of the danger, as other idolaters; yet even then, he *blesses himself in his own heart*, thinks himself safe from the wrath of the God of Israel, under the protection of his idols, and therefore says, "*I shall have peace*, though I be governed in my religion, not by God's institution, but by my own imagination, to add drunkenness to thirst, one act of wickedness to another." Idolaters were like drunkards, violently set upon their idols themselves, and industrious to draw others in with them. Revellings commonly accompanied their idolatries, (1 Pet. 4. 3.) so that this speaks a way to drunkards, (especially the drunkards of Ephraim,) who, when they are awake, being thirsty, seek it yet again, Prov. 23. 35. And those that made themselves drunk in honour of the idols, were the worst of drunkards. Note, *First*, There are many who are under the curse of God, and yet bless themselves; but it will soon be found that in blessing themselves, they do but deceive themselves. *Secondly*, Those that are ripe for ruin, and there is little hope of their repentance, who have made themselves believe that they shall have peace though they go on in a sinful way. *Thirdly*, Drunkenness is a sin that hardens the heart, and

debauches the conscience, as much as any other; a sin to which men are strangely tempted themselves, even when they have lately felt the mischiefs of it, to which they are strangely fond of drawing others, Hab. 2. 15. And such an insinuating sin is idolatry.

[3.] God's just severity against him for the sin, and for the impious affront he put upon God, in saying he should have peace, though he went on, so giving the lie to Eternal Truth, Gen. 3. 4. There is scarcely a threatening in all the book of God, that sounds more dreadful than this here. O that presumptuous sinners would read it and tremble! For it is not a mere bugbear to frighten children and fools, but a real declaration of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, v. 20, 21. *First*, The Lord shall not spare him. The days of his reprieve, which he abuses, will be shortened, and no mercy remembered in the midst of judgment. *Secondly*, The anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, which is the fiercest anger, shall smoke against him, like the smoke of a furnace. *Thirdly*, The curses written shall lie upon him, not only light upon him to terrify him, but abide upon him, to sink him to the lowest hell, John 3. 36. *Fourthly*, His name shall be blotted out, that is, he himself shall be cut off, and his memory shall rot and perish with him. *Fifthly*, He shall be separated unto evil, which is the most proper notion of a curse; he shall be cut off from all happiness, and all hope of it, and marked out for misery without remedy. And (*lastly*.) All this according to the curses of the covenant, which are the most fearful curses, being the just revenges of abused grace.

(2.) *Idolatry would be the ruin of their nation; it would bring plagues upon the land that connive at this root of bitterness*, and received the infection; as far as the sin spread, the judgment should spread likewise.

[1.] The ruin is described. It begins with plagues and sicknesses, (v. 22.) to try if they will be reclaimed by lesser judgments; but if not, it ends in a total overthrow, like that of Sodom, v. 23. As that valley which had been like the garden of the Lord for fruitfulness, was turned into a lake of salt and sulphur, so should the land of Canaan be made desolate and barren, as it has been ever since the last destruction of it by the Romans. The lake of Sodom bordered close upon the land of Israel, that by it they might be warned against the iniquity of Sodom; but, not taking the warning, they were made as like to Sodom in ruin as they had been in sin.

[2.] The reason of it is inquired into, and as signed.

*First*, It would be inquired into by the generations to come, (v. 22.) who would find the state of their nation in all respects the reverse of what it had been; and when they read both the history and the promise, would be astonished at the change. The stranger likewise, and the nations about them, as well as particular persons, would ask, *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land?* v. 24. Great desolations are thus represented elsewhere as striking the spectators with amazement, 1 Kings 9. 8, 9. Jer. 22. 8, 9. It was time for the neighbours to tremble, when judgment thus began at the house of God, 1 Pet. 4. 17. The emphasis of the question is to be laid upon *this land*; the land of Canaan; this good land, the glory of all lands; this land flowing with milk and honey. A thousand pit'ies that such a good land as this, should be made desolate; but this is not all; it is this *holy* land; the land of Israel, a people in covenant with God; it is Immanuel's land; a land where God was known and worshipped, and yet thus wasted. Note, 1. It is no new thing for God to bring desolating judgments upon a people that in profession are near to him,

Amos 3. 2. 2. He never does this without a good reason. 3. It concerns us to inquire into the reason, that we may give glory to God, and take warning to ourselves.

*Secondly,* The reason is here assigned, in answer to that inquiry. The matter would be so plain, that all men would say, It was because they *forsook the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, v. 25.* Note, God never forsakes any till they first forsake him. But those that desert the God of their fathers, are justly cast out of the inheritance of their fathers. They went and *served other gods, (v. 26.)* gods that they had no acquaintance with, nor lay under any obligations to, either in duty or gratitude; for God has not given the creatures to be served by us, but to serve us; nor have they done any good to us, (as some read it,) more than what God has enabled them to do; to the Creator therefore we are debtors, and not to the creatures. It was for this, that God was angry with them, (v. 27.) and *rooted them out in anger, v. 28.* So that, how dreadful soever the desolation was, the Lord was righteous in it, which is acknowledged, Dan. 4. 11, 12. "Thus" (says Mr. Ainsworth) "the law of Moses leaves sinners under the curse, and *rooted out of the Lord's land;* but the grace of Christ toward penitent believing sinners plants them again *upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up,* being kept by the power of God," Amos 9. 15.

*Lastly,* He concludes his prophecy of the Jews' rejection, just as St. Paul concludes his discourse on the same subject, when it began to be fulfilled, (Rom. 11. 33.) *How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out!* So here, (v. 29.) *Secret things belong to the Lord our God.* Some make it to be one sentence, *The secret things of the Lord our God are revealed to us and to our children,* as far as we are concerned to know them, and *he hath not dealt so with other nations:* but we make it two sentences, by which,

1. We are forbidden curiously to inquire into the secret counsels of God, and to determine concerning them. A full answer is given to that question, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?* sufficient to justify God, and admonish us. But if any ask further, why God would be at such a vast expense of miracles to form such a people, whose apostasy and ruin he plainly foresaw? Why he did not by his Almighty grace prevent it? Or, what he intends yet to do with them? Let such know that these are questions which cannot be answered, and therefore are not fit to be asked. It is presumption in us to pry into the *Arcana Imperii—the mysteries of Government,* and to inquire into the reasons of state, which *it is not for us to know.* See Acts 1. 7. John 21. 22. Col. 2. 18.

2. We are directed and encouraged diligently to inquire into that which God has made known; things *revealed belong to us and to our children.* Note, (1.) Though God has kept much of his counsel secret, yet there is enough revealed to satisfy and save us. He has *kept back nothing that is profitable for us,* but that only which it is good for us to be ignorant of. (2.) We ought to acquaint ourselves, and our children too, with the things of God that are revealed; we are not only allowed to search into them, but are concerned to do so; they are things which we and ours are nearly interested in. They are the rules we are to live by, the grants we are to live upon; and therefore we are to learn them diligently ourselves, and to teach them diligently to our children. (3.) All our knowledge must be in order to practice, for this is the end of all divine revelation, not to furnish us with curious subjects of speculation and discourse, with which to entertain ourselves and our friends, *but that we may do all the words of this law,* and be blessed in our deed.

## CHAP. XXX.

One would have thought that the threatenings in the close of the foregoing chapter had made a full end of the people of Israel, and had left their cause for ever desperate; but, in this chapter, we have a plain intimation of the mercy God had in store for them in the latter days, so that *mercy at length rejoices against judgment,* and has *the last word.* Here we have, I. Exceeding great and precious promises made to them, upon their repentance and return to God, v. 1. . 10. II. The righteousness of faith set before them in the plainness and easiness of the commandment that was now given them, v. 11. . 14. III. A fair reference of the whole matter to their choice, v. 15. . 20.

1. **A**ND it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, 2. And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou, and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; 3. That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. 4. If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: 5. And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. 6. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. 7. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. 8. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day. 9. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers; 10. If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, *and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.*

Two ways these verses may be considered; either as a conditional promise, or as an absolute prediction.

1. They are chiefly to be considered as a conditional promise, and so they belong to all persons and all people, and not to Israel only; and the design of them is to assure us that the greatest sinners,

if they repent and be converted, shall have their sins pardoned, and be restored to God's favour. This is the purport of the covenant of grace, it leaves room for repentance in case of misdemeanour, and promises pardon upon repentance, which the covenant of innocence did not. Now observe here,

1. How the repentance is described, which is the condition of these promises. (1.) It begins in *serious consideration*, v. 1, "Thou shalt call to mind that which thou hadst forgotten or not regarded." Note, Consideration is the first step toward conversion, Isa. 46. 8, *Bring to mind, O ye transgressors*. The prodigal son came to himself first, and then to his father. That which they should call to mind, is, the blessing and the curse. If sinners would but seriously consider the happiness they have lost by sin, and the misery they have brought themselves into, and that by repentance they may escape that misery, and recover that happiness, they would not delay to return to the Lord their God. The prodigal called to mind the blessing and the curse, when he considered his present poverty, and the plenty of bread in his father's house, Luke 15. 17. (2.) It consists in sincere conversion. The effect of the consideration cannot but be godly sorrow and shame, Ezek. 6. 9.—7. 16. But that which is the life and soul of repentance, and without which the most passionate expressions are but a jest, is, *returning to the Lord our God*, v. 2. If thou turn, (v. 10.) *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul*. We must return to our allegiance to God as our Lord and Ruler, our dependence upon him as our Father and Benefactor, our devotedness to him as our highest end, and our communion with him as our God in covenant. We must return to God from all that which stands in opposition to him, or competition with him. In this return to God, we must be upright—with the heart and soul, and universal—with all the heart and all the soul. (3.) It is evidenced by a constant obedience to the holy will of God. If thou shalt obey his voice, (v. 2.) *thou and thy children*; for it is not enough that we do our duty ourselves, but we must train up and engage our children to do it. Or this comes in as the condition of the entail of the blessing upon their children, provided their children keep close to their duty. This obedience must be with an eye to God, Thou shalt obey his voice, (v. 8.) and hearken to it, v. 10. It must be sincere and cheerful and entire, *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul*, v. 2. It must be from a principle of love, and that love too must be *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul*, v. 6. It is the heart and soul that God looks at, and requires; he will have that or nothing, and entire or not at all. And it must be universal; according to all that I command thee, v. 2. and again, v. 8. *to do all his commandments*. For he that allows himself in the breach of one commandment, involves himself in the guilt of condemning them all, James 2. 10. An upright heart has respect to all God's commandments, Ps. 119. 6.

2. What the favour is, which is promised upon this repentance. Though they are brought to God by their trouble and distress, in the nations whither they were driven, (v. 1.) yet God will graciously accept of them notwithstanding; for on this errand afflictions are sent, to bring us to repentance. Though they are driven out to the utmost parts of heaven, yet from thence their penitent prayers shall reach God's gracious ear, and there his favour shall find them out, v. 4. *Undique ad cælos tandem est viæ—From every place there is the same way to heaven*. This promise Nehemiah pleads in his prayer for dispersed Israel, Neh. 1. 9.

It is here promised, (1.) That God would have compassion upon them, as proper objects of his pity, v. 3. Against sinners that go on in sin, God has in-

dignation, (ch. 29. 20.) but on those that repent and bemoan themselves, he has compassion, Jer. 31. 18, 20. True penitents may take great encouragements from the compassions and tender mercies of our God, which never fail, but overflow. (2.) That he would turn their captivity, and gather them from the nations whither they were scattered, (v. 3.) though ever so remote, v. 4. One of the Chaldean paraphrasts applies this to the Messiah, explaining it thus, *The word of the Lord shall gather you by the hand of Elias the great Priest, and shall bring you by the hand of the king Messiah*; for this was God's covenant with him, that he should restore the preserved of Israel, Isa. 49. 6. And this was the design of his death, to gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad, John 11. 51, 52. To him shall the gathering of the people be. (3.) That he would bring them into their land again, v. 5. Note, Penitent sinners are not only delivered out of their misery, but restored to true happiness in the favour of God. The land they are brought into to possess it, is, though not the same, yet in some respects better than that which our first father Adam possessed, and out of which he was expelled. (4.) That he would do them good, (v. 5.) and rejoice over them for good, v. 9. For there is joy in heaven, upon the repentance and conversion of sinners: the father of the prodigal rejoiced over him for good. That he would multiply them, v. 5. And that, when they grew numerous, every mouth might have meat, he would make them plenteous in every work of their hand, v. 9. National repentance and reformation bring national plenty, peace, and prosperity. It is promised, *The Lord will make thee plenteous in the fruit of thy cattle and land, for good*. Many have plenty for hurt, the prosperity of fools destroys them. Then it is for good, when with it God gives us grace to use it for his glory. (5.) That he would transfer the curses they had been under, to their enemies, v. 7. When God was gathering them in to re-establish them, they would meet with much opposition; but the same curses that had been a burthen upon them, should become a defence to them, by being turned upon their adversaries. The cup of trembling should be taken out of their hand, and put into the hand of those that afflicted them, Isa. 51. 22, 23. (6.) That he would give them his grace to change their hearts, and rule there, v. 6, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord*.

Note, [1.] The heart must be circumcised to love God. The filth of the flesh must be put away; and the foolishness of the heart, as the Chaldean paraphrase expounds it. See Col. 2. 11, 12. Rom. 2. 29. Circumcision was a seal of the covenant; the heart is then circumcised to love God, when it is strongly engaged and held by that bond to this duty. [2.] It is the work of God's grace to circumcise the heart, and to shed abroad the love of God there; and this grace is given to all that repent, and seek it carefully. Nay, that seems to be rather a promise than a precept, v. 8, *Thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord*. He that requires us to return, promises grace to enable us to return; and it is our fault, if that grace be not effectual. Herein the covenant of grace is well ordered, that whatsoever is required in the covenant, is promised, *Turn ye at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit*, Prov. 1. 23. Lastly, It is observable how Moses here calls God, the Lord thy God, twelve times in those ten verses; intimating, First, That penitents may take direction and encouragement in their return to God, from their relation to him, Jer. 3. 22. "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God; therefore to thee we are bound to come, whither else should we go? And therefore we hope



to find favour with thee." *Secondly*, That those who have revolted from God, if they return to him, and do their first works, shall be restored to their former state of honour and happiness. *Bring hither the first robe.* In the threatenings of the former chapter, he is all along called the *Lord*, a God of power, and the Judge of all: but in the promises of this chapter, *the Lord thy God*, a God of grace, and in covenant with thee.

II. This may also be considered as a prediction of the repentance and restoration of the Jews; *When all these things are come upon thee*, (v. 1.) the blessing first, and after that, the curse, then the mercy in reserve shall take place. Though their hearts were wretchedly hardened, yet the grace of God could soften and change them; and then, though their case was deplorably miserable, the providence of God would redress all their grievances. Now, 1. It is certain that this was fulfilled in their return from their captivity in Babylon. It was a wonderful instance of their repentance and reformation, that Ephraim, who had been joined to idols, renounced them, and said, *What have I to do any more with idols?* That captivity effectually cured them of idolatry; and then God planted them again in their own land, and did them good. But, 2. Some think that it is yet further to be accomplished in the conversion of the Jews who are now dispersed, their repentance for the sin of their fathers in crucifying Christ, their return to God through him, and their accession to the christian church. But, *alas! who shall live when God doth this?*

11. For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. 12. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 13. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 14. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

Moses here urges them to obedience, from the consideration of the plainness and easiness of the command.

I. This is true of the law of Moses. They could never plead, in excuse of their disobedience, that God had enjoined them that which was either *unintelligible* or *impracticable*, impossible to be known or to be done, v. 11, *It is not hidden from thee.* That is, 1. "It is not too high for thee; thou needest not send messengers to heaven, (v. 12.) to inquire what thou must do to please God; nor needest thou to go *beyond sea*, (v. 13.) as the philosophers did, that travelled through many and distant regions in pursuit of learning; no, thou art not put to that labour and expense; nor is the commandment within the reach of those only that have a great estate, or a refined genius, but it is *very nigh unto thee*, v. 14. It is written in thy books, made plain upon tables, so that he that runs may read it; thy priests' lips keep this knowledge, and when any difficulty arises, thou mayest *ask the law at their mouth*, Mal. 2. 7. It is not communicated in a strange language; but it is in thy mouth, that is, in the vulgar tongue that is commonly used by thee, in which thou mayest hear it read, and talk of it familiarly among thy children. It is not wrapped up in obscure phrases or figures to puzzle and amuse thee, or in hieroglyphics, but it is in thy

heart; it is delivered in such a manner, as that it is level to thy capacity, even to the capacity of the meanest." 2. "It is not too *hard* or *heavy* for thee;" so the Septuagint reads it, v. 11. "Thou needest not say, 'As good attempt to climb to heaven, or flee upon the wings of the morning to the uttermost part of the sea, as go about to do all the words of this law:' no, the matter is not so; it is no such intolerable yoke as some evil-minded people represent it." It was indeed a heavy yoke in comparison with that of Christ, (Acts 15. 10.) but not in comparison with the idolatrous services of the neighbouring nations. God appeals to themselves, that he had not *made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense*, Isa. 43. 23. Mic. 6. 3. But he speaks especially of the moral law, and its precepts; "That is very nigh thee, consonant to the law of nature, which would have been found in every man's heart, and every man's mouth, if he would but have attended to it. There is that in thee, which *consents to the law that it is good*, Rom. 7. 16. Thou hast therefore no reason to complain of any insuperable difficulty in the observance of it."

II. This is true of the gospel of Christ, to which the apostle applies it, and makes it the language of the *righteousness which is of faith*, Rom. 10. 6.-8. And many think that is principally intended by Moses here; for he *wrote of Christ*, John 5. 46. This is God's commandment now under the gospel, that we *believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John 3. 23. If we ask, as the blind man did, *Lord, who is he?* or where is he, that we may believe on him? (John 9. 36.) this scripture gives an answer. We need not go up to heaven, to fetch him thence, for he is come down from thence in his incarnation; nor down to the deep, to fetch him thence, for thence he is come up in his resurrection. But the word is nigh us, and Christ in that word; so that if we believe with the heart that the promises of the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah are fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, and receive him accordingly, and confess him with our mouth, we have then Christ with us, and we shall be saved. He is near, very near, that justifies us. The law was plain and easy, but the gospel much more so.

15. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; 16. In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 17. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; 18. I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong *your* days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. 19. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: 20. That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; (for he is thy life, and the length of thy days;) that thou

mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Moses here concludes with a very bright light, and a very strong fire, that, if possible, what he had been preaching of, might find entrance into the understanding and affections of this unthinking people. What could be said more moving, and more likely to make deep and lasting impressions? The manner of his treating with them is so rational, so prudent, so affectionate, and every way so apt to gain the point, that it abundantly shows him to be in earnest, and leaves them inexcusable in their disobedience.

I. He states the case very fairly. He appeals to themselves concerning it, whether he had not laid the matter as plain as they could wish before them. 1. Every man covets to obtain life and good, and to escape death and evil; desires happiness, and dreads misery. "Well," says he, "I have showed you the way to obtain all the happiness you can desire, and to avoid all misery. Be obedient, and all shall be well, and nothing amiss." Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, in hopes of getting thereby the knowledge of good and evil; but it was a miserable knowledge they got, of good, by the loss of it, and of evil, by the sense of it; yet such is the compassion of God toward man, that, instead of giving him up to his own delusion, he has favoured him by his word with such a knowledge of good and evil, as will make him for ever happy, if it be not his own fault. 2. Every man is moved and governed in his actions by hope and fear, hope of good, and fear of evil, real or apparent. "Now," says Moses, "I have tried both ways; if you will be either drawn to obedience by the certain prospect of advantage by it, or driven to obedience by the no less certain prospect of ruin, in case you be disobedient; if you will be wrought upon either way, you will be kept close to God and your duty; but if you are not, you are utterly inexcusable."

Let us, then, hear the conclusion of the whole matter. (1.) If they and their's would love God and serve him, they should live and be happy, *v. 16.* If they would *love God*, and evidence the sincerity of their love by *keeping his commandments*; if they would make conscience of *keeping his commandments*, and do it from a principle of love; then God would do them good, and they should be as happy as his love and blessing could make them. (2.) If they or their's should at any time turn from God, desert his service, and worship other gods, that would certainly be their ruin, *v. 17, 18.* Observe, It is not for every failure in the particulars of their duty, that ruin is threatened, but for apostasy and idolatry: though every violation of the command deserved the curse, yet the nation would be destroyed by that only, which is the violation of the marriage-covenant. The purport of the New Testament is much the same; that, in like manner, sets before us life and death, good and evil; *He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned*, Mark 16. 16. And that faith includes love and obedience. To them who, *by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality*, God will give *eternal life*. But to them that are *contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, and so, in effect, worship other gods and serve them, to them will be rendered the indignation and wrath of an immortal God, the consequences of which must needs be the tribulation and anguish of an immortal soul, Rom. 2. 7. . . 9.

II. Having thus stated the case, he fairly puts them to their choice, with a direction to them to choose well. He appeals to heaven and earth con-

cerning his fair and faithful dealing with them *v. 19.* They could not but own, that whatever was the issue, he had delivered his soul; therefore that they might deliver their's, he bids them choose life, that is, choose to do their duty, which would be their life. Note, 1. Those shall have life, that choose it: they that choose the favour of God, and communion with him, for their felicity, and persecute their choice as they ought, shall have what they choose. 2. Those that come short of life and happiness, must thank themselves; they would have had it, if they had chosen it, when it was put to their choice: but they die because they *will* die; that is, because they do not like the life promised, upon the terms proposed.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> verse, (1.) He shows them, in short, what their duty is, *to love God*, and to love him as *the Lord*, a Being most amiable, and as *their God*, a God in covenant with them; and as an evidence of this love, to *obey his voice* in every thing, and by a constancy in this love and obedience to *cleave to him*, and never to forsake him in affection or practice. (2.) He shows them what reason there was for this duty. In consideration, [1.] Of their dependence upon God; *he is thy life, and the length of thy days*. He gives life, preserves life, restores life, and prolongs it by his power, though it is a frail life; and by his patience, though it is a forfeited life: he sweetens life with his comforts, and is the sovereign Lord of life; *in his hand our breath is*. Therefore we are concerned to keep ourselves in his love; for it is good having him our Friend, and bad having him our Enemy. [2.] Of their obligation to him for the promise of Canaan made to their fathers, and ratified with an oath. And, [3.] Of their expectations from him in performance of that promise; "Love God, and serve him, that thou mayest dwell in that land of promise, which thou mayest be sure He can give, and uphold to thee, who is *thy life and the length of thy days*." All these are arguments to us to continue in love and obedience to the God of our mercies.

## CHAP. XXXI.

In this chapter, Moses, having finished his sermon, I. Encourages both the people who were now to enter Canaan, (*v. 1. . 6.*) and Joshua who was to lead them, *v. 7, 8, 23.* And, II. He takes care for the keeping of these things always in their remembrance after his decease. 1. By the book of the law, which was, (1.) Written. (2.) Delivered into the custody of the priests, *v. 9.* and *24. . 27.* (3.) Ordered to be publicly read every seventh year, *v. 10. . 13.* 2. By a song which God orders Moses to prepare for their instruction and admonition. (1.) He calls Moses and Joshua to the door of the tabernacle, *v. 14, 15.* (2.) He foretells the apostasy of Israel in process of time, and the judgments they would thereby bring upon themselves, *v. 16. . 18.* (3.) He prescribes the following song to be a witness against them, *v. 19. . 21.* (4.) Moses wrote it, (*v. 22.*) and delivered it to Israel, with an intimation of the design of it, as he had received it from the Lord, *v. 28. . 30.*

1. **A**ND Moses went, and spake these words unto all Israel. 2. And he said unto them, *I am* a 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

*Loath to part* (we say) *bids oft farewell*; Moses does so to the children of Israel; not because he was loath to go to God, but because he was loath to leave them, fearing, that when he had left them, they would leave God: he had finished what he had to say to them by way of counsel and exhortation: here he calls them together to give them a word of encouragement, especially with reference to the wars of Canaan, which they were now to engage in. It was a discouragement to them, that Moses was to be removed, at a time when he could so ill be spared: though Joshua was continued to fight for them in the valley, they would want Moses to intercede for them on the hill, as he did, Exod. 17. 10. But there is no remedy; *Moses can no more go out, and come in*, v. 2. Not that he was disabled by any decay either of body or mind; for his *natural force was not abated*: (ch. 34. 7.) but he cannot any longer discharge his office; for, 1. He is a *hundred and twenty years old*, and it is time for him to think of resigning his honour, and returning to his rest. He that had arrived at so great an age then, when seventy or eighty was the ordinary stint, as appears by the prayer of Moses, (Ps. 90. 10.) might well think that he had accomplished as a hireling his day. 2. He is under a divine sentence, *Thou shalt not go over Jordan*. Thus a full stop was put to his usefulness; hitherto he must go, hitherto he must serve, but no further. So God had appointed it, and Moses acquiesces: for I know not why we should any of us desire to live a day longer than while God has work for us to do; nor shall we be accountable for more time than is allotted to us. But though Moses must not go over himself, he is anxious to encourage those that must.

I. He encourages the people; and never could any general animate his soldiers upon such good grounds, as those on which Moses here encourages Israel. 1. He assures them of the constant presence of God with them; (v. 3.) *The Lord thy God*, that has led thee and kept thee hitherto, *he will go over before thee*; and they might follow boldly, who were sure that they had God for their Leader. He repeats it again, (v. 6.) with an emphasis, "*The Lord thy God*, the great Jehovah, who is thine in covenant, *he it is*, He, and no less; He, and no other, *that goes before thee*; not only who by his promise has assured thee that he *will go before thee*; but by his ark, the visible token of his presence, shows thee that he *does* actually go before thee." And he repeats it with enlargement, "Not only he goes over before thee at first, to bring

thee in, but he will continue with thee all along; with thee and thine, *he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*; he will not disappoint thy expectations in any strait, nor will he ever desert thine interest; be constant to him, and he will be so to thee." This is applied by the apostle to call God's spiritual Israel, for the encouragement of their faith and hope; unto us is this gospel preached, as well as unto them, *He will never fail thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. 13. 5. 2. He commends Joshua to them for a leader; *Joshua, he shall go over before thee*, v. 3. One whose conduct and courage, and sincere affection to their interest, they had had long experience of; and one whom God had ordained and appointed to be their leader, and therefore, no doubt, would own and bless, and make a blessing to them. See Numb. 27. 18. Note, It is a great encouragement to a people, when, instead of some useful instruments that are removed, God raises up others to carry on his work. 3. He ensures their success. The greatest generals, supported with the greatest advantages, must yet own the issues of war to be doubtful and uncertain; the battle is not always to the strong, or to the bold; an ill accident unthought of may turn the scale against the highest hopes. But Moses had warrant from God to assure Israel that, notwithstanding the disadvantages they laboured under, they should certainly be victorious. A coward will fight, when he is sure to be a conqueror. God undertakes to do the work, *he will destroy these nations*; and Israel shall do little else than divide the spoil, *thou shalt possess them*, v. 3. Two things might encourage their hopes of this. (1.) The victories they had already obtained over Sihon and Og, v. 4. From which they might infer both the power of God, that he could do what he had done, and the purpose of God, that he would finish what he had begun to do. Thus must we improve our experience. (2.) The command God had given them to destroy the Canaanites, (ch. 7. 2.—12. 2.) to which he refers here, v. 5. That ye may do unto them according to all which I have commanded you; and from which they might infer, that if God had commanded them to destroy the Canaanites, no doubt, he would put it into the power of their hands to do it. Note, What God has made our duty, we have reason to expect opportunity and assistance from him for the doing of. So that from all this he had reason enough to bid them *be strong and of a good courage*, v. 6. While they had the power of God engaged for them, they had no reason to fear all the powers of Canaan engaged against them.

II. He encourages Joshua, v. 7, 8. Observe, 1. Though Joshua was an experienced general, and a man of approved gallantry and resolution, who had always signalized himself in many brave actions; yet Moses saw cause to bid him *be of good courage*, now that he was entering upon a new scene of action; and Joshua was far from taking it as an affront, or as an implicit questioning of his courage, to be thus charged, as sometimes we find proud and peevish spirits invidiously taking exhortations and admonitions for reproaches and reflections. Joshua himself is very well pleased to be admonished by Moses to be strong and of good courage. 2. He gives him his charge in the sight of all Israel, that they might be the more observant of him whom they saw thus solemnly inaugurated, and that he might set himself the more to be an example of courage to the people, who were witnesses to this charge here given to him, as well as to themselves. 3. He gives him the same assurances of the divine presence, and consequently of a glorious success, that he had given the people. God would be with him, would not forsake him, and therefore he should certainly accomplish the glorious enterprise

to which he was called and commissioned, *Thou shalt cause them to inherit the land of promise.* Note, Those shall speed well, that have God with them; and therefore they ought to be of good courage. Through God let us do valiantly, for through him we shall do victoriously; if we resist the Devil, he shall flee, and God shall *shortly tread him under our feet.*

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. 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, 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. 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; 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.

The law was given by Moses; so it is said, John 1. 17. He was not only intrusted to deliver it to that generation, but to transmit it to the generations to come; and here it appears that he was faithful to that trust.

1. *Moses wrote this law, v. 9.* The learned Bishop Patrick understands this of all the five books of Moses, which are often called the *Law*; though he supposes that Moses had written most of the Pentateuch before; yet he did not finish it till now; now he put his last hand to that sacred volume. Many think that the law here, (especially since it is called *this law*, this grand abridgement of the law,) is to be understood of this book of Deuteronomy; all those discourses to the people, which have taken up this whole book, he, being in them divinely inspired, wrote them as the word of God. He wrote this law, 1. That they who had heard it, might often review it themselves, and call it to mind. 2. That it might be the more safely handed down to posterity. Note, The church has received abundance of advantage from the writing, as well as from the preaching, of divine things; faith comes not only by hearing, but by reading. The same care that was taken of the law, thanks be to God, is taken of the gospel too: soon after it was preached, it was written, that it might reach to them on whom the ends of the world shall come.

II. Having written it, he committed it to the care and custody of the priests and elders. He delivered one authentic copy to the priests, to be laid up in the ark, (v. 26.) there to remain as a standard by which all other copies must be tried. And it is supposed that he gave another copy to the elders of each tribe, to be transcribed by all of that tribe, that were so disposed. Some observe that the elders, as well as the priests, were intrusted with the law, to intimate, that magistrates by their power, as well as ministers by their doctrine, are to maintain religion, and to take care that the law be not broken or lost.

III. He appointed the public reading of this law in a general assembly of all Israel every seventh year. The pious Jews (it is very probable) read the law daily in their families, and *Moses of old time was read in the synagogue every sabbath-day*, Acts 15. 21. But once in seven years, that the law might be the more magnified and made honourable, it must be read in a general assembly. Though we read the word in private, we must not think it needless to hear it read in public.

Now he here gives direction,

1. When this solemn reading of the law must be, that the time might add to the solemnity; it must be done, (1.) In the year of release. In that year the land rested, so that they could the better spare time to attend this service. Servants who were then discharged, and poor debtors who were then acquitted from their debts, must know, that, having the benefit of the law, it was justly expected they should yield obedience to it, and therefore give up themselves to be God's servants, because he had loosed their bonds. The year of release was typical of gospel-grace, which therefore is called the *acceptable year of the Lord*; for our remission and liberty by Christ engage us to keep his commandments, Luke 1. 74, 75. (2.) At the feast of the tabernacles in that year. In that feast they were particularly required to *rejoice before God*, Lev. 23. 40. Therefore then they must read the law, both to qualify their mirth and keep it in due bounds, and to sanctify their mirth, that they might make the law of God the matter of their rejoicing, and might read it with pleasure, and not as a task.

2. To whom it must be read; to all Israel, (v. 11.) men, women, and children, and the strangers, v. 12. The women and children were not obliged to go up to the other feasts, but to this only in which the law was read. Note, It is the will of God that all people should acquaint themselves with his word. It is a rule to all, and therefore should be read to all. It is supposed, since all Israel could not possibly meet in one place, or one man's voice reach them all, that as many as the courts of the Lord's house would hold, met there, and the rest at the same time in their synagogues. The Jewish doctors say, that the hearers were bound to *prepare their hearts, and to hear with fear and reverence, and with joy and trembling*, as in the day when the law was given on mount Sinai, and though they were great and wise men, who knew the whole law very well, yet they were bound to hear with great attention; for he that reads, is the messenger of the congregation to cause the words of God to be heard. I wish those that hear the gospel read and preached, would consider this.

3. By whom it must be read. *Thou shalt read it*, (v. 11.) "Thou, O Israel," by a proper person appointed for that purpose; or, "Thou, O Joshua, their chief ruler;" accordingly, we find that he did read the law himself, Josh. 8. 35. So did Josiah, 2 Chron. 34. 30. and Ezra, Neh. 8. 3. And the Jews say, that the king himself (when they had one) was the person that read in the courts of the temple; that a pulpit was set up for that purpose in the midst of the court, in which the king stood, that the book of the law was delivered him by the High Priest, that he stood up to receive it, uttered a prayer (as every one did that was to read the law in public) before he read; and then, if he pleased, he might sit down and read. But if he read standing, it was thought the more commendable, as (they say) King Agrippa did. Here let me offer it as a conjecture, that Solonon is called the *Preacher*, in his Ecclesiastes, because he delivered the substance of that book in a discourse to the people, after his public reading of the law in the feasts of tabernacles, according to this appointment here.

4 For what end it must be thus solemnly read. (1.) That the present generation might hereby keep up their acquaintance with the law of God, *v. 12.* They must hear, that they may learn, and *fear God, and observe to do their duty.* See here what we are to aim at in hearing the word; we must hear, that we may learn, and grow in knowledge; and every time we read the scriptures, we shall find that there is still more and more to be learned out of them. We must learn, that we may fear God, that is, that we may be duly affected with divine things; and must fear God, that we may *observe and do the words of his law*; for in vain do we pretend to fear him, if we do not obey him. (2.) That the rising generation might betimes be leavened with religion, (*v. 13.*) not only that those who know something, may thus know more; but that the *children which have not known any thing*, may betimes know this, how much it is their interest as well as duty to fear God.

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. 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. 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. 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? 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. 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. 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. 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.

Here,

I. Moses and Joshua are summoned to attend the Divine Majesty at the door of the tabernacle, *v. 14.* Moses is told again that he must shortly die; even those that are most ready and willing to die, have need to be often reminded of its approach. In consideration of this, he must come himself to meet God; for whatever improves our communion with God, furthers our preparation for death. He must also bring Joshua with him to be presented to God for a successor, and to receive his commission and charge. Moses readily obeys the summons, for he was not one of those that look with an evil eye upon their successors, but, on the contrary, rejoiced in him.

II. God graciously gives them the meeting. *He appeared in the tabernacle*, (as the Shechinah used to appear,) *in a pillar of a cloud*, *v. 15.* This is the only time in all this book that we read of the glory of God appearing, whereas we often read of it in the three foregoing books: which perhaps signifies that, in the latter days, under the evangelical law, such visible appearances as these of the divine glory are not to be expected, but we must take heed to the more sure word of prophecy.

III. He tells Moses, that, after his death, the covenant which he had taken so much pains to make between Israel and their God, would certainly be broken.

1. That Israel would *forsake God*, *v. 16.* And we may be sure that if the covenant between God and men be broken, the blame must lie on man, it is he that breaks it; we have often observed it, That God never leaves any till they first leave him. Worshipping the gods of the Canaanites, (who had been the natives, but from henceforward were to be looked upon as the strangers of that land,) would undoubtedly be counted a deserting of God, and, like adultery, a violation of the covenant. Thus still, those are revolvers from Christ, and will be so adjudged, who either make a god of their money by reigning covetousness, or a god of their belly by reigning sensuality. They that *turn to other gods*, (*v. 18.*) forsake their own mercies. This apostasy of their's is foretold to be an effect of their prosperity, (*v. 20.*) *They shall have eaten and filled themselves*; that is all they will aim at in eating, to gratify their own appetites, and then they will wax fat, grow secure and sensual; their security will take off their dread of God, and his judgments; and their sensuality will incline them to the idolatries of the heathen, which *made provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it.* Note, God has a clear and infallible foresight of all the wickedness of the wicked, and has often covenanted with those who, *he knew, would deal very treacherously*, (*Isa. 48. 8.*) and conferred many favours on those who, *he knew, would deal very ungratefully.*

2. That then God would forsake Israel; and justly does he cast them off, who had so unjustly cast him off, *v. 17.* *My anger shall be kindled against them, and I will forsake them.* His providence would forsake them, no longer to protect and prosper them, and then they would become a prey to all their neighbours. His spirit and grace would forsake them, no longer to teach and guide them, and then they would be more and more bigoted, besotted, and hardened in their idolatries. Thus *many evils and troubles would befall them*, (*v. 17, 21.*) which would be such manifest indications of God's displeasure against them, that they themselves would be constrained to own it, *Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?* They that have sinned away their God, will find that thereby they pull all mischiefs upon their

own heads. But that which completed their misery, was, that God would *hide his face from them in that day*, that day of their trouble and distress, *v. 18*. Whatever outward troubles we are in, if we have but the light of God's countenance, we may be easy. But if God hide his face from us and our prayers, we are undone.

IV. He directs Moses to deliver them a song, in the composing of which he should be divinely inspired, and which should remain a standing testimony for God, as faithful to them in giving them warning, and *against* them, as persons false to themselves in not taking warning, *v. 19*. The written word in general, as well as this song in particular, is a witness for God, against all those that break covenant with him. *It shall be for a testimony*, Matth. 24. 14. The wisdom of man has devised many ways of conveying the knowledge of good and evil, by laws, histories, prophecies, proverbs, and, among the rest, by songs; each has its advantages; and the wisdom of God has in the scripture made use of them all, that ignorant and careless men might be left inexcusable. 1. This song, if rightly improved, might be a means to prevent their apostasy; for in the inditing of it God had an eye to their present imagination, now, *before they were brought into the land of promise*, *v. 21*. God knew very well that there were in their hearts such gross conceits of the deity, and such inclinations to idolatry, that they would be tinder to the sparks of that temptation; and therefore in this song he gives them warning of their danger that way. Note, The word of God is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of men's hearts*, and meets with them strangely by its reproofs and corrections, Heb. 4. 12. Compare 1 Cor. 14. 25. Ministers who preach the word, know not the imaginations men go about, but God, whose word it is, knows perfectly. 2. If this song did not prevent their apostasy, yet it might help to bring them to repentance, and to reduce them from their apostasy. When their troubles are come upon them, *this song shall not be forgotten*, but may serve as a glass to show them their own faces, that they may humble themselves, and return to him from whom they have revolted. Note, These whom God has mercy in store for, he may leave to fall, yet he will provide means for their recovery. Medicines are prepared beforehand for their cure.

22. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. 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. 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, 25. That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 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. 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? 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. 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. 30. And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

Here,

I. The charge is given to Joshua, which God had said (*v. 14*.) he would give him. The same in effect that Moses had given him, (*v. 7*.) *Be strong and of a good courage*, *v. 23*. Joshua had now heard from God so much of the wickedness of the people whom he was to have the conduct of, as could not but be a discouragement to him; "Nay," says God, "how bad soever they are, thou shalt go through thy undertaking, for *I will be with thee*. Thou shalt put them into possession of Canaan; if they afterward by their sin throw themselves out of it again, that will be no fault of thine, nor any dishonour to thee, therefore *be of good courage*."

II. The solemn delivery of the book of the law to the Levites to be deposited in the side of the ark, is here again related, (*v. 24*.. 26.) of which before, *v. 9*. Only they are here directed where to treasure up this precious original, not in the ark, there only the two tables were preserved, but in another box *by the side of the ark*. It is probable that this was the very box that was found in the house of the Lord, (having been somehow or other misplaced,) in the days of Josiah, (2 Chron. 34. 14.) and so perhaps the following words here, *that it may be a witness against thee*, may particularly point at that event which happened so long after; for the finding of this very book occasioned the public reading of it by Josiah himself, for a witness against a people who were then almost ripe for their ruin by the Babylonians.

III. The song which follows in the next chapter, is here delivered to Moses, and by him to the people. He wrote it, first, (*v. 22*.) as the Spirit of God indited it, and then *spoke it in the ears of all the congregation*, (*v. 30*.) and taught it them, (*v. 22*.) that is, gave out copies of it, and ordered the people to learn it by heart.

It was delivered by word of mouth first, and afterward in writing, to the elders and officers, as the representatives of their respective tribes, (*v. 28*.) by them to be transmitted to their several families and households. It is delivered to them with a solemn appeal to heaven and earth, concerning the fair warning which was given them by it, of the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God; and with a declaration of the little joy and little hope Moses had in and concerning them.

1. He declares what little joy he had of them while he was with them, *v. 27*. It is not in a passion that he says, *I know thy rebellion*, (as once he said it unadvisedly, *Hear now, ye rebels*.) but it is the result of a long acquaintance with them, *ye have been rebellious against the Lord*. Their rebellions against himself he makes no mention of, these he had long since forgiven and forgotten; but their rebellions against God they must be made to hear of, that they may be ever repented of, and never repeated.

2. What little hopes he had of them now that he was leaving them. From what God had now said to him, (*v. 16*.) more than from his own experience of them, though that was discouraging enough, he



tells them, (v. 29.) *I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves.* Many a sad thought, no doubt, it occasioned to this good man, to foresee the apostasy and ruin of a people he had taken so much pains with, in order to do them good, and make them happy; but this was his comfort, that he had done his duty, and that God would be glorified, if not in their settlement, in their dispersion. Thus our Lord Jesus, a little before his death, foretold the rise of false Christs and false prophets, (Matth. 24. 24.) notwithstanding which, and all the apostasies of the later times, we may be confident that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, for the foundation of God stands sure.*

### CHAP. XXXII.

In this chapter we have, I. The song which Moses, by the appointment of God, delivered to the children of Israel, for a standing admonition to them, to take heed of forsaking God. This takes up most of the chapter. In which we have, 1. The preface, v. 1, 2. 2. A high character of God, and in opposition to that, a bad character of the people of Israel, v. 3. 6. 3. A rehearsal of the great things God had done for them, and in opposition to that, an account of their ill carriage toward him, v. 7. 18. 4. A prediction of the wasting destroying judgments which God would bring upon them for their sins, in which God is here justified by the many aggravations of their impieties, v. 19. 33. 5. A promise of the destruction of their enemies and oppressors at last, and the glorious deliverance of a remnant of Israel, v. 36. 43. II. The exhortation with which Moses delivered this song to them, v. 44. 47. III. The orders God gives to Moses to go up to mount Nebo and die, v. 48. 52.

1. **G**IVE ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: 3. Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. 4. *He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* 5. They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children: *they are a perverse and crooked generation.* 6. Do ye thus requite the LORD? O foolish people and unwise! is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?

Here is,

I. A commanding preface or introduction to this song of Moses, v. 1, 2. He begins, 1. With a solemn appeal to heaven and earth concerning the truth and importance of what he was about to say, and the justice of the divine proceedings against a rebellious and backsliding people, for he had said, (ch. 31. 28.) that he would in this song call heaven and earth to record against them. Heaven and earth would sooner hear than this perverse and unthinking people; for they revolt not from their obedience to their Creator, but *continue to this day, according to his ordinances, as his servants,* (Ps. 119. 89. 91.) and therefore will rise up in judgment against rebellious Israel. Heaven and earth will be witnesses against sinners, witnesses of the warning given them, and of their refusal to take the warning; (see Job 20. 27) *the heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him.* Or heaven and earth are here put for the inhabitants of both, angels and men; but shall agree to

justify God in his proceedings against Israel, and to declare his righteousness, Ps. 50. 6. See Rev. 19. 1, 2. 2. He begins with a solemn application of what he was about to say to the people, v. 2, *My doctrine shall drop as the rain.* (1.) "It shall be a beating sweeping rain to the rebellious;" so one of the Chaldee paraphrasts expounds the first clause. Rain is sometimes sent for judgment, witness that with which the world was deluged; and so the word of God, as to some it is reviving and refreshing, and a *savour of life unto life*, so to others it is terrifying and killing, and a *savour of death unto death.* (2.) It shall be as a sweet and comfortable dew to those who are rightly prepared to receive it. Observe, [1.] The subject of this song is doctrine; he had given them a song of praise and thanksgiving, (Exod. 15.) but this is a song of instruction, for in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, we are not only to give glory to God, but to *teach and admonish one another*, Col. 3. 16. Hence many of David's psalms are entitled *Maschil, to give instruction.* [2.] This doctrine is fitly compared to rain and showers which come from above, to make the earth fruitful, and *accomplish that for which they are sent,* (Isa. 55. 10, 11.) and depend not upon the wisdom or will of man, Mic. 5. 7. It is a mercy to have this rain come often upon us, and our duty to *drink it in*, Heb. 6. 7. 3. He promises that his doctrine shall drop and distil as the dew, and the small rain, which descend silently and without noise. The word preached is *then* likely to profit, when it comes gently, and sweetly insinuates itself into the hearts and affections of the hearers. 4. He bespeaks their acceptance and entertainment of it, and that it might be as sweet and pleasant and welcome to them, as rain to the *thirsty earth*, Ps. 72. 6. And the word of God is *then* likely to do us good, when it is thus acceptable. 5. The learned Bishop Patrick understands it as a prayer, that his words, which were sent from heaven to them, might sink into their hearts and soften them, as the rain softens the earth, and so make them fruitful in obedience.

II. An awful declaration of the greatness and righteousness of God, v. 3, 4. He begins with this, and lays it down as his first principle, 1. To preserve the honour of God, that no reproach might be cast upon him for the sake of the wickedness of his people Israel: how wicked and corrupt soever they are who are called by his name, he is just and right and all that is good, and is not to be thought the worse of for their badness. 2. To aggravate the wickedness of Israel, who knew and worshipped such a holy God, and yet were themselves so unholy. And, 3. To justify God in his dealings with them; we must abide by it, that God is righteous, even when his judgments are a *great deep*, Jer. 12. 1. Ps. 36. 6.

Moses here sets himself to *publish the name of the Lord,* (v. 3.) that Israel, knowing what a God he is whom they had avouched for their's, might never be such fools as to exchange him for a false god, a dunghill god. He calls upon them therefore to ascribe greatness to him. It will be of great use to us for the preventing of sin, and the preserving of us in the way of our duty, always to keep up high and honourable thoughts of God, and to take all occasions to express them. *Ascribe greatness to our God.* We cannot add to his greatness, for it is infinite; but we must acknowledge it, and give him the glory of it.

Now, when Moses would set forth the greatness of God, he does it, not by explaining his eternity and immensity, or describing the brightness of his glory in the upper world, but, by showing the faithfulness of his word, the perfection of his works, and the wisdom and equity of all the administrations of

his government; for in these his glory shines most clear to us, and these are the things revealed concerning him, which *belong to us and our children*, v. 4. (1.) *He is the Rock*. So he is called six times in this chapter, and the LXX all along translate it *ὁ θεός, God*. The learned Mr. Hugh Broughton reckons, that God is called the *Rock* eighteen times (besides in this chapter) in the Old Testament, (though in some places we translate it, *strength*,) and charges it therefore upon the Papists, that they make St. Peter a god, when they make him the rock on which the church is built. God is the Rock, for he is in himself immutable and immovable, and he is, to all that seek him and fly to him, an impenetrable shelter, and to all that trust in him, an everlasting foundation. (2.) *His work is perfect*. His work of creation was so, *all very good*; his works of providence are so, or will be so in due time, and when the mystery of God shall be finished, the perfection of his works will appear to all the world; nothing that God does, can be mended, Eccl. 3. 14. God was now perfecting what he had promised and begun for his people Israel, and from the perfection of this work they must take occasion to give him the glory of the perfection of all his works. The best of men's works are imperfect, they have their flaws and defects, and are left unfinished: but *as for God, his work is perfect*; if he begin, he will make an end. (3.) *All his ways are judgment*. The ends of his ways are all righteous, and he is wise in the choice of the means in order to those ends. Judgment signifies both prudence and justice. *The ways of the Lord are right*, Hos. 14. 9. (4.) *He is a God of truth*; whose word we may take and rely upon, for he cannot lie, who is faithful to all his promises, nor shall his threatenings fall to the ground. (5.) *He is without iniquity*; one who never cheated any that trusted in him, never wronged any that appealed to his justice, nor ever was hard upon any that cast themselves upon his mercy. (6.) *Just and right is he*. As he will not wrong any by punishing them more than they deserve, so he will not fail to recompense all those that serve him, or suffer for him. He is indeed just and right; for he will effectually take care that none shall lose by him. Now what a bright and amiable idea does this one verse give us of the God whom we worship; and what reason have we then to love him and fear him, to live a life of delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him; this is *our Rock*, and *there is no unrighteousness in him*; nor can there be, Ps. 92. 15.

III. A high charge exhibited against the Israel of God, whose character was in all respects the reverse of that of the *God of Israel*, v. 5. 1. *They have corrupted themselves*. Or, *It has corrupted itself*; the body of the people has: *the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint*. God did not corrupt them, for *just and right is he*; but they are themselves the sole authors of their own sin and ruin; and both are included in this word, *They have debauched themselves*: for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. And *they have destroyed themselves*, Hos. 13. 9. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear the guilt and grief, Prov. 9. 12. 2. *Their spot is not the spot of his children*. Even God's children have their spots, while they are in this imperfect state; for if we say, we have no sin, no spot, we deceive ourselves. But the sin of Israel was none of those; it was not an infirmity which they strove against, watched and prayed against, but an evil which their hearts were fully set in them to do: For, 3. They were a *perverse and crooked generation*, that were actuated by a spirit of contradiction, and therefore would do what was forbidden, because it was forbidden; would set up their own humour and fancy in opposition to the will of

God, were impatient of reproof, hated to be reformed, and *went on frowardly in the way of their heart*. The Chaldee paraphrase reads this verse thus: *They have scattered, or changed themselves, and not him, even the children that served idols; a generation that has depraved its own works, and alienated itself*. Idolaters cannot hurt God, or do any damage to his works, or make him a stranger to this world. See Job 35. 6. No, all the hurt they do, is to themselves and their own works. The learned Bishop Patrick gives another reading of it, *Did he do him any hurt?* That is, "Is God the Rock to be blamed for the evils that should befall Israel? No, *His children are their blot*," that is, "All the evil that comes upon them, is the fruit of their children's wickedness; for the whole generation of them is crooked and perverse. All that are ruined, ruin themselves, they die, because they will die."

IV. A pathetic expostulation with this provoking people for their ingratitude, v. 6, "*Do ye thus requite the Lord?*" Surely you will not hereafter be so base and disingenuous in your carriage toward him as you have been." 1. He reminds them of the obligations God had laid upon them to serve him, and to cleave to him. He had been a Father to them, had begotten them, fed them, carried them, nursed them, and borne their manners, and would they spurn at the bowels of a Father? He had bought them; had been at a vast expence of miracles to bring them out of Egypt; had given *men for them, and people for their life*, Isa. 43. 4. *Is not he thy Father, thy Owner?* so some, that has an incontestable propriety in thee, and *the ox knoweth his owner*. "He has made thee, and brought thee into being; established thee and kept thee in being; has he not done so? Can you deny the engagements you lie under to him, in consideration of the great things he has done and designed for you?" And are not our obligations, as baptized christians, equally great and strong to our Creator that made us, our Redeemer that bought us, and our Sanctifier that has established us. 2. From hence he infers the evil of deserting him and rebelling against him. For, (1.) It was base ingratitude. "*Do ye thus requite the Lord?*" Are these the returns you make him for all his favours to you? The powers you have from him, will you employ them against him?" See Mic. 6. 3, 4. John 10. 32. This is such monstrous villany, as all the world will cry shame on: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. (2.) It was prodigious madness; *O foolish people and unwise*. Fools, and double fools; *who has bewitched you?* Gal. 3. 1. "Fools, indeed, to disoblige one on whom you have such a necessary dependence! To forsake your own mercies for lying vanities!" Note, All wilful sinners, especially sinners in Israel, are the most unwise and the most ungrateful people in the world.

7. Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee; 8. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. 9. For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. 10. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. 11. As an eagle stirreth

up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; 12. *So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.* 13. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; 14. Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

Moses, having in general represented God to them, as their great Benefactor, whom they were bound in gratitude to observe and obey, in these verses gives particular instances of God's kindness to them, and concern for them.

I. Some instances were ancient; and for proof of them, he appeals to the records, (*v. 7.*) *Remember the days of old*, that is, "Keep in remembrance the history of those days, and of the wonderful providences of God concerning the old world, and concerning your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; you will find a constant series of mercies attending them, and how long since things were working toward that which is now come to pass." Note, The authentic histories of ancient times are of singular use, and especially the history of the church in its infancy, both the Old Testament and the New Testament church.

II. Others were more modern; and for proof of them, he appeals to their fathers and elders that were now alive and with them. Parents must diligently teach their children, not only the word of God, his laws, (*ch. 6. 7.*) and the meaning of his ordinances, (*Exod. 12. 26, 27.*) but his works also, and the methods of his providence. See *Ps. 78. 3, 4, 6, 7.* And the children should desire the knowledge of those things which will be of use to engage them to their duty, and to direct them in it.

Three things are here enlarged upon as instances of God's kindness to his people Israel, and strong obligations upon them never to forsake him.

1. The early designation of the land of Canaan for their inheritance; for herein it was a type and figure of our heavenly inheritance, that it was of old ordained and prepared in the divine counsels, *v. 8.* When the earth was divided among the sons of men, in the days of Peleg, after the flood, and each family had its lot, in which it must settle, and by degrees grow up into a nation, then God had Israel in his thoughts, and in his eye; for, designing this good land into which they were now going, to be in due time an inheritance for them, he ordered that the posterity of Canaan, rather than any other of the families then in being, should be planted there in the mean time, to keep possession, as it were, till Israel was ready for it; because those families were under the curse of Noah, by which they were condemned to servitude and ruin, (*Gen. 9. 25.*) and therefore would be the more justly, honourably, easily, and effectually, rooted out, when the fulness of time was come that Israel should take possession. Thus he set the bounds of that people with an eye to the designed number of the children of Israel, that they might have just as much as would serve their turn. And some observe, that Canaan himself, with his eleven sons, (*Gen. 10. 15, &c.*) makes up just the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. Note, (1.) The wisdom of God has appointed the bounds of men's habitation, and determined both the place

and time of our living in the world, *Acts 17. 26.* When he gave the earth to the children of men, (*Ps. 115. 16.*) it was not that every man might catch as he could; no, he divides to nations their inheritance, and will have every one to know his own, and not to invade another's property. (2.) Infinite wisdom has a vast reach, and designs beforehand what is brought to pass long after; *Known unto God are all his works* from the beginning to the end, (*Acts 15. 18.*) but they are not so to us, *Ecl. 3. 11.* (3.) The great God, in governing the world, and ordering the affairs of states and kingdoms, has a special regard to his church and people, and consults their good in all. See *2 Chron. 16. 9.* and *Isa. 45. 4.* The Canaanites thought they had as good and sure a title to their land as any of their neighbours had to their's; but God intended that they should only be tenants, till the Israelites, their landlords, came. Thus God serves his own purposes of kindness to his people, by those that neither knew him nor love him, *who mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa. 10. 7. Mic. 4. 12.*

The reason given for the particular care God took for this people, so long before they were either born or thought of, (as I may say,) in our world, does yet more magnify the kindness, and make it obliging beyond expression, (*v. 9.*) *for the Lord's portion is his people.* All the world is his, he is the Owner and Possessor of heaven and earth, but his church is his in a peculiar manner; it is his demesne, his vineyard, his garden enclosed, he has a peculiar delight in it, it is the beloved of his soul, in it he walks, he dwells, it is his rest for ever. He has a particular concern for it, keeps it as the apple of his eye; he has particular expectations from it, as a man has from his portion; has a much greater rent of honour, glory, and worship, from that distinguished remnant, than from all the world besides. That God should be his people's Portion is easy to be accounted for, for he is their Joy and Felicity; but how they should be his portion, who neither needs them, nor can be benefited by them, must be resolved into the wondrous condescensions of free grace. *Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes so to call and count them.*

2. The forming of them into a people, that they might be fit to enter upon this inheritance, like an heir at age, at the time appointed of the Father. And herein also Canaan was a figure of the heavenly inheritance; for as it was from eternity proposed and designed for all God's spiritual Israel, so they are, in time, (and it is a work of time,) fitted and made meet for it, *Col. 1. 12.* The deliverance of Israel out of slavery, by the destruction of their oppressors, was attended with so many wonders obvious to sense, and had been so often spoken of, that it needed not to be mentioned in this song; but the gracious works God wrought upon them, would be less taken notice of than the glorious works he had wrought for them, and therefore he chooses rather to advert to them. A great deal was done to model this people, to cast them into some shape, and to fit them for the great things, designed them in the land of promise; and it is here most elegantly described.

(1.) *He found him in a desert land, v. 10.* This refers, no doubt, to the wilderness through which God brought them to Canaan, and in which he took so much pains with them; it is called *the church in the wilderness, Acts 7. 38.* There it was born, and nursed, and educated, that all might appear to be divine and from heaven, since they had there no communication with any part of this earth, either for food or learning. But because he is said to find them there, it seems designed also to represent both the bad state and the bad character of that people, when God first began to appear for them. [1.]

Their condition was forlorn, Egypt was to them a desert land, and a waste howling wilderness, for they were bond-slaves in it, and cried by reason of their oppression, and were perfectly bewildered and at a loss for relief; there God found them, and thence he fetched them. And, [2.] Their disposition was very unpromising; so ignorant were the generality of them in divine things, so stupid and unapt to receive the impressions of them, so peevish and humoursome, so froward and quarrelsome, and withal so strangely addicted to the idolatries of Egypt, that they might well be said to be found in a desert land; for one might as reasonably expect a crop of corn from a barren wilderness, as any good fruit of service to God from a people of such a character. Those that are renewed and sanctified by grace, should often remember what they were by nature.

(2.) He led him about and instructed him. When God had them in the wilderness, he did not bring them directly to Canaan, but made them go a great compass round, and so he instructed them; that is, [1.] By this means he took time to instruct them, and gave them commandments as they were able to receive them. Those whose business it is to instruct others, must not expect it will be done of a sudden; learners must have time to learn. [2.] By this means he tried their faith and patience, and dependence upon God, and inured them to the hardships of the wilderness, and so instructed them. Every stage had something in it that was instructive; even when he chastened them, he thereby taught them out of his law. It is said (Ps. 107. 7.) that he led them forth by the right way; and yet here, that he led them about; for God always leads his people the right way, however to us it may seem about; so that the furthest way about, proves, if not the nearest way, yet the best way home to Canaan. How God instructed them, is explained long after, (Neh. 9. 13.) *Thou gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments*; and especially, (v. 20.) *Thou gavest them also thy good Spirit to instruct them*; and he instructs effectually. We may well imagine, how unfit that people had been for Canaan, had they not first gone through the discipline of the wilderness.

(3.) He kept him as the apple of his eye, with all the care and tenderness that could be, from the malignant influences of an open sky and air, and all the perils of an inhospitable desert. The pillar of a cloud and fire, was both a guide and a guard to them.

(4.) He did that for them, which the eagle does for her nest of young ones, v. 11, 12. The similitude was touched, Exod. 19. 4, *I bare you on eagles' wings*; here it is enlarged upon. The eagle is observed to have a strong affection for her young, and to show it, not only as other creatures, by protecting them and making provision for them, but by educating them and teaching them to fly. For that purpose, she stirs them out of the nest where they lie dozing, flutters over them, to show them how they must use their wings, and then accustoms them to fly upon her wings till they have learned to fly upon their own. This, by the way, is an example to parents to train up their children to business, and not to indulge them in idleness and the love of ease. God did thus by Israel; when they were in love with slavery, and loath to leave it, God, by Moses, stirred them up to aspire after liberty, and many a time kept them from returning to the house of bondage again. He carried them out of Egypt, led them into the wilderness, and now at length had led them through it. *The Lord alone did lead him*, he needed not any assistance, nor did he take any to be a partner with him

in the achievement; which was a good reason why they should serve the Lord only, and no other, so much as in partnership, much less in rivalry with him. There was no strange God with him to contribute to Israel's salvation, and therefore there should be none to share in Israel's homage and adoration, Ps. 81. 9.

3. The settling of them in a good land. This was done in part already, in the happy planting of the two tribes and a half, an earnest of what would speedily and certainly be done to the rest of the tribes.

(1.) They were blessed with glorious victories over their enemies; (v. 13.) *He made him ride on the high places of the earth*; that is, he brought him on with conquest, he brought him home with triumph. He rode over the high places or strong holds that were kept against him; sat in ease and honour upon the fruitful hills of Canaan; in Egypt they looked mean, and were so, in poverty and disgrace: but in Canaan they looked great, and were so advanced and enriched, they rode in state, as a people whom the King of kings delighted to honour.

(2.) With great plenty of all good things. Not only the ordinary increase of the field, but, which was uncommon, *Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock*. Which may refer either [1.] To their miraculous supply of fresh water out of the rock that followed them in the wilderness; which is called *honey and oil*, because the necessity they were reduced to, made it as sweet and acceptable as honey and oil at another time. Or, [2.] To the great abundance of honey and oil they should find in Canaan, even in those parts that were least fertile. The rocks of Canaan should yield a better increase than the fields and meadows of other countries. Other productions of Canaan are mentioned, v. 14. Such abundance, and such variety of wholesome food, (and every thing the best in its kind,) that every meal might be a feast if they pleased. Excellent bread made of the best corn, here called the *kidneys of the wheat*; (for a grain of wheat is not much unlike a kidney;) butter and milk in abundance; the flesh of cattle well fed; and for their drink, no worse than the *pure blood of the grape*. So indulgent a Father was God to them, and so kind a Benefactor. Ainsworth makes the plenty of good things in Canaan to be a figure of the fruitfulness of Christ's kingdom, and the heavenly comforts of his word and Spirit; for the children of his kingdom he has *butter and milk*, the sincere milk of the word, and *strong meat for strong men*, with the *wine that makes glad the heart*.

15. But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. 16. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. 17. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God, to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. 18. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

We have here a description of the apostasy of Israel from God, which would shortly come to pass, and which already they had a disposition to. One would have thought that a people under so many obligations to their God, in duty, gratitude, and interest, should never have turned from him; but, alas! they turned aside quickly.

Here are two great instances of their wickedness, and each of them amounted to an apostasy from God.

I. Security and sensuality, pride and insolence, and the other common abuses of plenty and prosperity, v. 15. These people were called *Jeshurun, an upright people*, so some; *a seeing people*, so others; but they soon lost the reputation both of their knowledge and of their righteousness; for, being well-fed, 1. They *waxed fat, and grew thick*, that is, they indulged themselves in all manner of luxury and gratifications of their appetites, as if they had nothing to do but to *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it*. They *grew fat*, that is, they grew big and unwieldy, unmindful of business, and unfit for it; dull and stupid, careless and senseless; and this was the effect of their plenty. Thus the *prosperity of fools destroys them*, Prov. 1. 32. Yet this was not the worst of it. They *kicked*: they grew proud and insolent, and *lifted up the heel* even against God himself; if God rebuked them, either by his prophets, or by his providence, they *kicked against the goad*, as an untamed heifer, or a *bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, and in their rage persecuted the prophets, and flew in the face of providence itself. And thus he *forsook God that made him*, (not paying due respects to his Creator, nor answering the ends of his creation,) and put an intolerable contempt upon *the Rock of his salvation*, as if he were not indebted to him for any past favours, nor had any dependence upon him for the future. Those that make a God of themselves, and a god of their bellies, in pride and wantonness, and cannot bear to be told of it, certainly thereby forsake God, and show lightly they esteem him.

II. Idolatry was the great instance of their apostasy, and which the former led them to, as it made them sick of their religion, self-willed, and fond of changes. Observe,

1. What sort of gods they chose and offered sacrifice to, when they forsook the God that made them, v. 16, 17. This aggravated their sin, that those very services which they should have done to the true God, they did, (1.) To *strange gods*, that could not pretend to have done them any kindness, or laid them under any obligation to them; gods that they had no knowledge of, nor could expect any benefit by, for they were strangers. Or, they are called *strange gods*, because they were other than the one only true God to whom they were betrothed, and ought to have been faithful. (2.) To *new gods*, that came newly up; for even in religion, the antiquity of which is one of its honours, vain minds have strangely affected novelty, and in contempt of the Ancient of days, have been fond of new gods. A new god! can there be a more monstrous absurdity? Would we find the right way to rest, we must ask for the *good old way*, Jer. 6. 16. It was true, their fathers had worshipped *other gods*, (Josh. 24. 2.) and perhaps it had been some little excuse if the children had returned to them; but to serve *new gods whom their fathers feared not*, and to like them the better for being new, was to open a door to endless idolatries. (3.) They were such as were no gods at all, but mere counterfeits and pretenders; their names, the invention of men's fancies, and their images, the work of men's hands. Nay, (4.) They were devils. So far from being *gods, fathers, and benefactors* to mankind, they really were *destroyers*; so the word signifies; such as aimed to do mischief: if there were any spirits or invisible powers that possessed their idol-temples and images, they were evil spirits and malignant powers, whom yet they did not need to worship for fear they should hurt them, as they say the Indians do; for they that faithfully worship God, are out of the Devil's reach: nay, the Devil can destroy those

only that sacrifice to him. Now mad are idolaters, who forsake the *Rock of salvation* to run themselves upon the *rock of perdition*!

2. What a great affront this was to Jehovah their God.

(1.) It was justly interpreted a forgetting of him; (v. 18.) *of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful*. Mindfulness of God would prevent sin, but when the world is served and the flesh indulged, God is forgotten; and can any thing be more base and unworthy than to forget the God that is the Author of our being, by whom we subsist, and in whom we live and move? And see what comes of it, Isa. 17. 10, 11, *Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength*, though the strange slips be pleasant plants at first, yet the harvest at last will be a *heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow*. There is nothing got by forgetting God.

(2.) It was justly resented as an inexcusable offence. *They provoked him to jealousy and to anger*, (v. 16.) for their idols were abominations to him. See here God's displeasure against idols, whether they be set up in the heart, or in the sanctuary. [1.] He is jealous of them, as rivals with him for the throne in the heart. [2.] He hates them, as enemies to his crown and government. [3.] He is, and will be, very angry with those that have any respect or affection for them. Those consider not what they do, that provoke God; for *who knows the power of his anger?*

19. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. 20. 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. 21. They have moved me to jealousy with *that which* is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which* are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23. I will heap mischiefs upon them: I will spend mine arrows upon them. 24. *They shall be burnt* with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. 25. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of gray hairs.

The method of this song follows the method of the predictions in the foregoing chapter, and therefore, after the revolt of Israel from God, described in the foregoing verses, here follow immediately the resolves of divine Justice concerning them; we deceive ourselves, if we think that God will thus be mocked by a foolish faithless people that play fast and loose with him.

I. He had delighted in them, but now he would reject them with detestation and disdain, v. 19. When the Lord saw their treachery and folly, and base ingratitude, he abhorred them, he despised them

So some read it. Sin makes us odious in the sight of the holy God; and no sinners are so loathsome to him, as those that he has called, and that have called themselves, his sons and his daughters, and yet have been provoking to him. Note, The nearer any are to God in profession, the more noisome are they to him if they are defiled in a sinful way, Ps. 106. 39, 40.

II. He had given them the tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them; but now he would withdraw, and *hide his face from them*, v. 20. His *hiding his face* signifies his great displeasure; they had *turned the back* upon God, and now God would *turn his back* upon them; (compare Jer. 18. 17. with Jer. 2. 27.) but here it denotes also the slowness of God's proceedings against them in a way of judgment. They began in their apostasy with omissions of good, and so proceeded to commissions of evil. In like manner, God will first suspend his favours, and let them see what the issue of that will be, what a friend they lose when they provoke God to depart, and will try whether that will bring them to repentance. Thus we find God hiding himself, as it were, in expectation of the event, Isa. 57. 17. To justify himself in leaving them, he shows that they were such as there was no dealing with: for, 1. They were froward, and a people that could not be pleased; or, obstinate in sin, and that could not be convinced and reclaimed. 2. They were faithless, and a people that could not be trusted. When he saved them, and took them into covenant, he said, *Surely they are children that will not lie*, (Isa. 63. 8.) but when they proved otherwise, *children in whom is no faith*, they deserved to be abandoned, and that the God of truth should have no more to do with them.

III. He had done every thing to make them easy and to please them, but now he would do that against them, which should be most vexations to them. The punishment here answers the sin, v. 21. 1. They had provoked God with despicable deities, which were not gods at all, but vanities; creatures of their own imagination, that could not pretend either to merit, or to repay, the respects of their worshippers; the more vain and vile the gods were, after which they went a whoring, the greater was the offence to that great and good God whom they set them up in competition with, and contradiction to. This put two great evils into their idolatry, Jer. 2. 13. 2. God would therefore plague them with despicable enemies, that were worthless, weak, and inconsiderable, and not deserving the name of a people, which was a great mortification to them, and aggravated the oppressions they groaned under. The more base the people were that tyrannised over them, the more barbarous they would be; none so insolent as a beggar on horseback; besides that it would be infamous to Israel, who had so often triumphed over great and mighty nations, to be themselves trampled upon by the weak and foolish, and to come under the curse of Canaan who was to be a servant of servants. But God can make the weakest instrument a scourge to the strongest sinner; and they that by sin insult their mighty Creator, are justly insulted by the meanest of their fellow-creatures. This was remarkably fulfilled in the days of the Judges, when they were sometimes oppressed by the very Canaanites themselves, whom they had subdued, as Judges 4. 2. But the apostle applies it to the conversion of the Gentiles, who had been not a people in covenant with God, and foolish in divine things, yet were brought into the church sorely to the grief of the Jews, who, upon all occasions, showed a great indignation at it, which was both their sin and their punishment, as envy always is, Rom. 10. 19.

IV. He had planted them in a good land, and replenished them with all good things; but now he would strip them of all their comforts, and bring them to ruin. The judgments threatened are very terrible, v. 22--25. 1. The fire of God's anger shall consume them, v. 22. Are they proud of their plenty? It shall burn up the increase of the earth. Are they confident of their strength? It shall destroy the very foundations of their mountains: there is no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission to lay all waste. It shall burn to the lowest hell, that is, it shall bring them to the very depth of misery in this world, which yet would be but a faint resemblance of the complete and endless misery of sinners in the other world. The damnation of hell (as our Saviour calls it) is the fire of God's anger, fastening upon the guilty conscience of a sinner, to its inexpressible and everlasting torment, Isa. 30. 33. 2. The arrows of God's judgments shall be spent upon them, till his quiver is quite exhausted, v. 23. The judgments of God, like arrows, fly swiftly, (Ps. 64. 7) reaching those at a distance who flatter themselves with hopes of escaping them, Ps. 21. 8, 12. They come from an unseen hand, but wound mortally, for God never misses his mark, 1 Kings 22. 34. The particular judgments here threatened, are, (1.) Famine; they shall be burnt, or parched, with hunger. (2.) Pestilence and other diseases, here called *burning heat, and bitter destruction*. (3.) The insults of the inferior creatures; *the teeth of beasts, and the poison of serpents*, v. 24. (4.) War, and the fatal consequences of it, v. 25. [1.] Perpetual frights. When the sword is without, there cannot but be terror within; (2 Cor. 7. 5.) *without were fightings, within were fears*: those who cast off the fear of God, are justly exposed to the fear of enemies. [2.] Universal deaths; the sword of the Lord, when it is sent to lay all waste, will destroy without distinction; neither the strength of the young man, nor the beauty of the virgin, nor the innocence of the suckling, nor the gravity or infirmity of the man of gray hairs, will be their security from the sword when it devours one as well as another. Such devastation does war make, especially when it is pushed on by men as ravenous as wild beasts, and as venomous as serpents, v. 24. See here what mischief sin does; and reckon these fools that make a mock at it.

26. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: 27. Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this. 28. For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. 29. Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! 30. How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up? 31. For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. 32. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: 33. Their wine is the



poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. 34. *Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?* 35. *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.* 36. *For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.* 37. *And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted;* 38. *Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.*

After many terrible threatenings of deserved wrath and vengeance, we have here surprising intimations of mercy, undeserved mercy, which rescues against judgment, and by which it appears that God has *no pleasure in the death of sinners*, but would rather they should *turn and live*.

1. In *jealousy for his own honour*, he will not make a full end of them, v. 26-28. 1. It cannot be denied, but that they deserved to be utterly ruined, and that their remembrance should be made to cease from among men; so that the name of an Israelite should never be known but in history; for they were a nation void of counsel, (v. 28.) the most sottish inconsiderate people that ever were; that would not believe the glory of God, though they saw it, nor understand his loving kindness, though they tasted it, and lived upon it. Of them who could cast off such a God, such a law, such a covenant, for vain and dunghill-deities, it might truly be said, *There is no understanding in them.* 2. It had been an easy thing with God to ruin them and blot out the remembrance of them; when the greatest part of them were cut off by the sword, it was but scattering the remnant into some remote obscure corners of the earth, where they should never have been heard of more, and the thing had never been done. See Ezek. 5. 12. God can destroy those that are most strongly fortified, disperse those that are most closely united, and bury those names in perpetual oblivion, that have been most celebrated. 3. Justice demanded it. *I said I would scatter them.* It is fit they should be cut off from the earth, that have cut themselves off from their God; why should they not be dealt with according to their deserts? 4. Wisdom considered the pride and insolence of the enemy, which would take occasion from the ruin of a people that had been so dear to God, and for whom he had done such great things, to reflect upon God, and to imagine that because they had got the better of Israel, they had carried the day against the God of Israel. *The adversaries will say, Our hand is high;* high indeed, when it has been too high for those whom God himself fought for; nor will they consider that *the Lord has done all this*, but will dream that they have done it in despite of him, as if the God of Israel were as weak and impotent, and as easily run down, as the pretended deities of other nations. 5. In consideration of this, Mercy prevails for the sparing of a remnant, and the saving of that unworthy people from utter ruin. *I feared the wrath of the enemy.* It is an expression after the manner of men; it is certain that God fears no man's wrath, but he acted in this matter as if he had feared it. Those few good people in Israel, that had a concern for the honour of God's name, *fear the wrath of the enemy*

in this instance more than any other, as Joshua, (ch. 7. 9.) and David often; and because they feared it, God himself is said to fear it. He needed not Moses to plead it with him, but reminded himself of it, *What will the Egyptians say?* Let all those whose hearts tremble for the ark of God and his Israel, comfort themselves with this, that God will *work for his own name*, and will not suffer it to be profaned and polluted: how much soever we deserve to be disgraced, God will never *disgrace the throne of his glory*.

II. In *concern for their welfare*, he earnestly desires their conversion; and in order to that, their serious consideration of their latter end, v. 29. Observe, 1. Though God had pronounced them a foolish people, and of no understanding, yet he wishes they were wise, as Deut. 5. 29, *O that there were such a heart in them!* and Ps. 94. 8, *Ye fools, when will ye be wise?* God delights not to see sinners ruin themselves, but desires they will help themselves; and if they will, he is ready to help them. 2. It is a great piece of wisdom, and will contribute much to the return of sinners to God, seriously to consider the latter end, or, the future state. It is here meant particularly of that which God by Moses had foretold concerning this people in the latter days: but it may be applied more generally. We ought to understand and consider, (1.) The latter end of life, and the future state of the soul. To think of death as our removal from a world of sense to a world of spirits; the final period of our state of trial and probation, and our entrance upon an unchangeable state of recompense and retribution. (2.) The latter end of sin, and the future state of those that live and die in it. O that men would consider the happiness they will lose, and the misery they will certainly plunge themselves into, if they go on still in their trespass! *What will be in the end thereof,* Jer. 5. 31. *Jerusalem forgot this, and therefore came down wonderfully,* Lam. 1. 9.

III. He calls to mind the great things he had done for them formerly, as a reason why he should not quite cast them off. This seems to be the meaning of that, (v. 30, 31.) "How should one Israelite have been too hard for a thousand Canaanites, as they have been many a time, but that God, who is greater than all gods, fought for them!" And so it corresponds with that, Isa. 63. 10, 11. When he was *turned to be their enemy*, as here, *and fought against them* for their sins, *then he remembered the days of old*, saying, *Where is he that brought them out of the sea?* So here, his arm begins to awake a sin the days of old *against the wrath of the enemy*, Ps. 138. 7. There was a time when the enemies of Israel were sold by their own rock, that is, their own idol-gods, who could not help them, but betray them, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, had shut them up as sheep for the slaughter. For the enemies themselves must own that their gods were a very unequal match for the God of Israel. *For their vine is of the vine of Sodom*, v. 32, 33. This must be meant of the enemies of Israel, who therefore fell so easily before the sword of Israel, because they were ripe for ruin, and the measure of their iniquity was full.

Yet these verses may be understood of the strange prevalence of the enemies of Israel against them, when God made use of them as the *rod of his anger*, Isa. 10. 5, 6. "How should one Canaanite chase a thousand Israelites," (as it is threatened against those that trust to Egypt for help, Isa. 30. 17, *One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one*), "unless Israel's Rock had deserted them and given them up?" For otherwise, however they may impute their power to their gods, (Hab. 1. 11.) as the Philistines imputed their victory to Dagon; it is certain, the enemies' rock could not have prevailed against the Rock of

Israel; God would soon have subdued their enemies, (Ps. 81. 14.) but that the wickedness of Israel delivered them into their hands. For their vine, that is, Israel's, is of the *vine of Sodom*, v. 32, 33. They were planted a choice vine, wholly a right seed, but by sin were become the *degenerate plant of a strange vine*, (Jer. 2. 21.) and not only transcribed the iniquity of Sodom, but out-did it, Ezek. 16. 48. God called them his *vineyard*, his *pleasant plant*, Isa. 5. 7. But their fruits were, 1. Very offensive and displeasing to God, bitter as gall. 2. Very malignant, and pernicious one to another, *like the cruel venom of asps*. Some understand this of their punishment; their sin would be *bitterness in the latter end*, (2 Sam. 2. 26.) it would *bite like a serpent and sting like an adder*, Job. 20. 14. Prov. 23. 32.

IV. He resolves upon the destruction of those at last, that had been their persecutors and oppressors. When the cup of trembling goes round, the king of Babel shall pledge it at last, Jer. 25. 26. and see Isa. 51. 22, 23. The day is coming, when the judgment that began at the house of God, shall end with the sinner and ungodly, 1 Pet. 4. 17, 18.

God will in due time bring down the church's enemies.

I. In *displeasure against their wickedness*, which he takes notice of, and keeps an account of, v. 34, 35. Is not this implacable fury of their's against Israel, *laid up in store with me*, to be reckoned for hereafter, when it shall be made to appear, that *to me belongs vengeance*? Some understand it of the sin of Israel; especially their persecuting the prophets, which was laid up in store against them from the blood of righteous Abel, Matth. 23. 25. However, it teaches us, that the wickedness of the wicked is all *laid up in store with God*. (1.) He observes it, Ps. 90. 8. He knows both what the vine is, and what the grapes: what the temper of the mind, and what the actions of life. (2.) He keeps a record of it, both in his own omniscience, and in the sinner's conscience; and this is *sealed up among his treasures*, which denotes both safety and secrecy: these books cannot be lost; nor will they be opened till the great day. See Hos. 13. 12. (3.) He often delays the punishment of sin for a great while, it is laid up in store, till the measure be full, and the day of divine patience be expired. See Job 21. 28, 29. (4.) There is a day of reckoning coming, when all the treasures of guilt and wrath will be broken up, and the sin of sinners shall surely find them out. [1.] The thing itself will certainly be done, for the Lord is a *God to whom vengeance belongs*, and therefore he will repay, Isa. 59. 18. This is quoted by the apostle, to show the severity of God's wrath against those that revolt from the faith of Christ, Heb. 10. 30. [2.] It will be done in due time; in the best time; nay, it will be done in a short time. *The day of their calamity is at hand*; and though it may seem to tarry, it *lingers not*, it *slumbers not*, but *makes haste*. *In one hour* shall the judgment of Babylon come.

2. He will do it in *compassion to his own people*, who, though they had greatly provoked him, yet stood in relation to him, and their misery appealed to his mercy, v. 36. *The Lord shall judge his people*, that is, judge for them against their enemies, plead their cause, and break the yoke of oppression under which they had long groaned, *repenting himself for his servants*; not changing his mind, but changing his way, and fighting for them, as he had fought against them, *when he sees that their power is gone*. This plainly points at the deliverances God wrought for Israel by the Judges out of the hands of those to whom he had sold them for their sins. See Judg. 2. 11, 12. And how *his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, Judg. 10. 16. And this when they were reduced to the last extremity; God

helped them when they could not help themselves; for there was *none shut up or left*; that is, none that dwelt either in cities or walled towns, in which they were shut up, nor any that dwelt in scattered houses in the country, in which they were left at a distance from neighbours. Note, God's time to appear for the deliverance of his people, is, when things are at the worst with them. God tries his people's faith, and stirs up prayer, by letting things go to the worst, and then magnifies his own power, and fills the faces of his enemies with shame, and the hearts of his people with so much the greater joy, by rescuing them out of extremity, as *brands out of the burning*.

3. He will do it in *contempt*, and to the *reproach* of the idol-gods, v. 37, 38. *Where are their gods*? Two ways it may be understood; (1.) That God would do that for his people, which the idols they had served, could not do for them. They had forsaken God, and been very liberal in their sacrifices to idols; had brought to their altars the *fat of their sacrifices*, and the *wine of their drink-offerings*, which they supposed their deities to feed upon, and on which they feasted with them. "Now," says God, "will these gods you have made your court to, at so great an expense, help you in your distress, and so repay you for all your charges in their service? Go, get you to the gods you have served, and let them deliver you," Judg. 10. 14. This is intended to convince them of their folly in forsaking a God that could help them, for those that could not, and so bring them to repentance, and qualify them for deliverance. When the adulteress shall follow after her lovers, and not overtake them, pray to her idols, and receive no kindness from them, then thou shalt say, *I will go and return to my first husband*, Hos. 2. 7. See Isa. 16. 12. Jer. 2. 27, 28. Or, (2.) That God would do that *against his enemies*, which the idols they had served, could not save them from. Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar boldly challenged the God of Israel to deliver his worshippers, (Isa. 37. 10. Dan. 3. 15.) and he did deliver them, to the confusion of their enemies. But the God of Israel challenged Bel and Nebo to deliver their worshippers, to rise up and help them, and to be their protection, (Isa. 47. 12, 13.) but they were so far from helping them, that they themselves, that is, their images, which was all that was of them, *went into captivity*, Isa. 46. 1, 2. Note, Those who trust to any rock but God, will find it sand, in the day of their distress; it will fail them then, when they most need it.

39. See now that I, *even I, am* he, and *there is no god with me*: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is *there any* that can deliver out of my hand. 40 For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. 41. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. 42. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. 43. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

This conclusion of the song speaks three things.

1. Glory to God, v. 39. See now upon the whole matter, *that I, even I, am he*. Learn this from the destruction of idolaters, and the inability of their idols to help them. The great God here demands the glory, 1. Of a *self-existence*; *I, even I, am he*. Thus Moses concludes with that name of God, by which he was first made to know him, (Exod. 3. 14.) "*I am that I am*. I am he that I have been, that I will be, that I have promised to be, that I have threatened to be; all shall find me true to both."

The Targum of Uzzielides paraphrases it thus, *When the word of the Lord shall reveal himself to redeem his people, he shall say to all people, See, that I am now what I am, and have been, and I am what I will be*: which we know very well how to apply to him, who said to John, *I am he which is, and was, and is to come*, Rev. 1. 8. These words, *I, even I, am he*, we meet often in those chapters of Isaiah, where God is encouraging his people to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, Isa. 41. 4.—43. 11, 13, 25.—46. 4.

2. Of a *sole supremacy*; "*There is no god with me*. None to help with me, none to cope with me. See Isa. 43. 10, 11. 3. Of an *absolute sovereignty, and universal agency*, *I kill, and I make alive*, that is, All evil and all good come from his hand of providence, he forms both the light of life, and the darkness of death, Isa. 45. 7. Lam. 3. 37, 38. Or, he kills and wounds his enemies, but heals and makes alive his own people; kills and wounds with his judgments those that revolt from him, and rebel against him, but when they return and repent, he heals them, and makes them alive with his mercy and grace. Or, it denotes his incontestable authority to dispose of all his creatures, and the beings he has given them, so as to serve his own purposes by them; *whom he will, he slays, and whom he will, he keeps alive*, when his judgments are abroad. Or, thus, Though he kill, yet he makes alive again; *though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion*, Lam. 3. 32. Though he have torn, he will heal us, Hos. 6. 1, 2. The Jerusalem Targum reads it, *I kill those that are alive in this world, and make those alive in the other world that are dead*. And some of the Jewish doctors themselves, have observed that death, and a life after it, that is, eternal life, is intimated in these words. 4. Of an *irresistible power*, which cannot be controlled; *neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand*, those that I have marked for destruction. As no exception can be made against the sentence of God's justice, so no escape can be made from the executions of his power.

II. Terror to his enemies, v. 40.—42. Terror indeed, to those that hate him, as all those do, that serve other gods, that persist in wilful obedience to the divine law, and that malign and persecute his faithful servants; these are they whom God will render vengeance to; those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them. In order to alarm such in time to repent and return to their allegiance, the wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against them. 1. The divine sentence is ratified with an oath, v. 40. *He lifts up his hand to heaven* the habitation of his holiness; this was an ancient and very significant sign used in swearing, Gen. 14. 22. And since he could *swear by no greater*, he swears by himself and his own life. Those are miserable without remedy, that have the word and oath of God against them. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, that the sin of sinners shall be their ruin, if they go on in it. 2. Preparation is made for the execution; *the glittering sword is whet*. See Ps. 7. 12. It is a sword bathed in heaven, Isa. 34. 5. While the sword is in whetting, space is given to the sinner to repent and make his peace, which if he does not, the wound will be the deeper. And as the sword is whet, so the hand that is to wield it, takes

hold on judgment with a resolution to go through with it. 3. The execution itself will be very terrible; *the sword shall devour flesh* in abundance, and the arrows be made drunk with blood, such vast quantities of it shall be shed; the blood of the slain in battle, and of the captives, to whom no quarter should be given, but who shall be put under military execution. When he begins revenge, he will make an end; for in this also his work is perfect. The critics are much perplexed with the last clause, *From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy*. The learned Bishop Patrick (that great master) thinks it may admit this reading, *From the king to the slave of the enemies*, Jer. 50. 35.—37. When the sword of God's wrath is drawn, it will make bloody work, blood to the horse-bridles, Rev. 14. 20.

III. Comfort to his own people, v. 43. *Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people*. He concludes the song with words of joy; for in God's Israel there is a remnant whose end will be peace; God's people will rejoice at last, will rejoice everlastingly. Three things are here mentioned as matter of joy. 1. The enlarging of the church's bounds: the apostle applies the first words of this verse to the conversion of the Gentiles, Rom. 15. 10, *Rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people*. See what the grace of God does in the conversion of souls, it brings them to rejoice with the people of God; for true religion brings us acquainted with true joy; so great a mistake are they under, that think it tends to make men melancholy. 2. The avenging of the church's controversies upon her adversaries. He will make inquisition for the blood of his servants, and it shall appear how precious it is to him, for they that spilt it, shall have blood given them to drink. 3. The mercy God has in store for his church, and for all that belong to it, he will be *merciful to his land and to his people*, that is, to all every where, that fear and serve him. Whatever judgments are brought upon sinners, it shall go well with the people of God; in this let Jews and Gentiles rejoice together.

44. And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun. 45. And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: 46. And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. 47. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. 48. And the LORD spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, 49. Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: 50. And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: 51. Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of

Israel. 52. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.

Here is,

I. The solemn delivery of this song to the children of Israel, v. 44, 45. Moses spake it to as many as could hear him, while Joshua, in another assembly, at the same time, delivered it to as many as his voice would reach. Thus coming to them from the mouth of both their governors, Moses, who was laying down the government, and Joshua, who was taking it up, they would see they were both in the same mind, and that though they changed their commander, there was no change in the divine command; Joshua, as well as Moses, would be a witness against them, if ever they forsook God.

II. An earnest charge to them to mind these and all the rest of the good words that Moses had said unto them. How earnestly does he long after them all, how very desirous that the word of God might make deep and lasting impressions upon them, how jealous over them with a godly jealousy, lest they should at any time let slip these great things; I. The duties he charges upon them, are, (1.) Carefully to attend to these themselves; "Set your hearts both to the laws, and to the promises and threatenings; the blessings and curses, and now at last to this song. Let the mind be closely applied to the consideration of these things; be affected with them; be intent upon duty, and cleave to it with full purpose of heart." (2.) Faithfully to transmit these things to those that should come after them: "What interest you have in your children, or influence upon them, use it for this purpose; and *command them*, (as your father Abraham did, Gen. 18. 19.) *to observe to do all the words of this law.*" They that are good themselves, cannot but desire that their children may be so likewise; and that posterity may keep up religion in their day, and the entail of it may not be cut off. 2. The arguments he uses to persuade them to make religion their business, and to persevere in it, are, (1.) The vast importance of the things themselves which he had charged upon them, v. 47, "*It is not a vain thing, because it is your life.*" It is not an indifferent thing, but of absolute necessity; it is not a trifle, but a matter of consequence, a matter of life and death; mind it, and you are made for ever; neglect it, and you are for ever undone." O that men were but fully persuaded of this, that religion is their life, even the life of their souls! (2.) The vast advantage it would be of to them: *Through this thing ye shall prolong your days* in Canaan, which is a typical promise of that eternal life, which Christ has assured us they shall enter into, *that keep the commandments of God*, Matth. 19. 17.

III. Orders given to Moses concerning his death. Now that this renowned witness for God has finished his testimony, he must go up to mount Nebo and die; in the prophecy of Christ's two witnesses there is a plain allusion to Moses and Elias, (Rev. 11. 6.) and perhaps their removal, being by martyrdom, is no less glorious than the removal either of Moses or Elias. Orders were given to Moses that self-same day, v. 48. Now that he had done his work, why should he desire to live a day longer? He had indeed formerly prayed that he might go over Jordan, but now he is entirely satisfied, and, as God had bidden him, *said no more of that matter.*

1. God here reminds him of the sin he had been guilty of, for which he was excluded Canaan, (v. 51.) that he might the more patiently bear the rebuke because he had sinned; and that now he might renew his sorrow for that unadvised word, for it is

good for the best of men to die repenting of the infirmities they are conscious to themselves of. It was an omission that was thus displeasing to God; he did *not sanctify God*, as he ought to have done, *before the children of Israel*, he did not carry himself with a due decorum, in executing the orders he had then received.

2. He reminds him of the death of his brother Aaron, (v. 50.) to make his own the more familiar, and the less formidable. Note, It is a great encouragement to us, when we die, to think of our friends that have gone before us through that darksome valley, especially of Christ, our elder Brother and great High Priest.

3. He sends him up to a high hill from thence to take a view of the land of Canaan and then die, v. 49, 50. The remembrance of his sin might make death terrible, but the sight God gave him of Canaan, took off the terror of it, as it was a token of God's being reconciled to him, and a plain indication to him, that though his sin shut him out of the earthly Canaan, yet it should not deprive him of that better country, which in this world can only be seen, and that with an eye of faith. Note, Those may die with comfort and ease whenever God calls for them, (notwithstanding the sins they remember against themselves,) who have a believing prospect and a well-grounded hope of eternal life beyond death.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

Yet Moses has not done with the children of Israel; he seemed to have taken final leave of them in the close of the foregoing chapter, but still he has something more to say. He had preached them a farewell sermon, a very copious and pathetic discourse. After sermon he had given out a psalm, a long psalm; and now nothing remains but to dismiss them with a blessing; that blessing he pronounces in this chapter in the name of the Lord, and so leaves them. I. He pronounces them all blessed in what God had done for them already, especially in giving them his law, v. 2. . 5. II. He pronounces a blessing upon each tribe, which is both a prayer for, and a prophecy of, their felicity. 1. Reuben, v. 6. 2. Judah, v. 7. 3. Levi, v. 8. . 11. 4. Benjamin, v. 12. 5. Joseph, v. 13. . 17. 6. Zebulun and Issachar, v. 18, 19. 7. Gad, v. 20, 21. 8. Dan, v. 22. 9. Naphtali, v. 23. 10. Asher, v. 24, 25. III. He pronounces them all in general blessed, upon the account of what God would be to them, and do for them, if they were obedient, v. 26. . 29.

1. **AND** this is the blessing, wherewith **A** Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2. And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. 3. Yea, he loved the people: all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. 4. Moses commanded us a law, *even* the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. 5. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

The first verse is the title of the chapter: it is a blessing. In the foregoing chapter he had thundered out the terrors of the Lord against Israel for their sin; it was a chapter, like Ezekiel's roll, full of lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Now to soften that, and that he might not seem to part in anger, he here subjoins a blessing, and leaves his peace, which should descend and rest upon all

those that were the sons of peace. Thus Christ's last work on earth was to *bless his disciples*, (Luke 24. 50.) like Moses here, in token of parting friends. Moses blessed them, 1. As a prophet; a *man of God*. Note, It is a very desirable thing to have an interest in the prayers of those that have an interest in heaven; it is a *prophet's reward*. In this blessing Moses not only expresses his good wishes to this people, but by the spirit of prophecy foretells things to come concerning them. 2. As a parent to Israel; for so good princes are to their subjects. Jacob upon his death-bed *blessed his sons*, (Gen. 49. 1.) in conformity to whose example Moses here blesses the tribes that were descended from them, to show that though they had been very provoking, yet the entail of the blessing was not cut off. The doing this immediately before his death, would not only be the more likely to leave an impression upon them, but would be an indication of the great good-will of Moses to them, that he desired their happiness, though he must die and not share in it.

He begins his blessing with a lofty description of the glorious appearances of God to them in giving them the law, and the great advantage they had by it.

I. There was a visible and illustrious discovery of the divine majesty; enough to convince and for ever silence atheists and infidels, to awaken and affect those that were most stupid and careless, and to put to shame all secret inclinations to other gods, v. 1. 1. His appearance was glorious: he shined forth like the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Even Seir and Paran, two mountains at some distance, were illuminated by the divine glory which appeared on mount Sinai, and reflected some of the rays of it; so bright was the appearance, and so much taken notice of by the adjacent countries. To this the prophet alludes, to set forth the wonders of the divine providence, Hab. 3. 3, 4. Ps. 18. 7.. 9. The Jerusalem Targum has a strange gloss upon this, that, "when God came down to give the law, he offered it on mount Seir to the Edomites, but they refused it; because they found in it, *Thou shalt not kill*. Then he offered it on mount Paran to the Ishmaelites, but they also refused it; because they found in it, *Thou shalt not steal*; and then he came to mount Sinai and offered it to Israel, and they said, *All that the Lord shall say, we will do*." I would not have transcribed so groundless a conceit but for the antiquity of it. 2. His attendance was glorious; he came with his holy myriads, as Enoch had long since foretold he should come in the last day to judge the world, Jude 14. These were the angels, those *chariots of God, in the midst of which the Lord was, on that holy place*, Ps. 68. 17. They attended the divine majesty, and were employed as his ministers in the solemnities of the day. Hence the law is said to be *given by the disposition of angels*, Acts 7. 53. Heb. 2. 2.

II. He gave them his law, which is, 1. Called a *fiery law*, because it was given them *out of the midst of the fire*, (Deut. 4. 33.) and because it works like fire; if it be received, it is melting, warming, purifying, and burns up the dross of corruption; if it be rejected, it hardens, sears, torments, destroys. The spirit descended in cloven tongues *as of fire*; for the gospel also is a fiery law. 2. It is said to *go from his right hand*, either because he wrote it on tables of stone; or, denoting the power and energy of the law, and the divine strength that goes along with it, that it may not return void. Or, it came as a gift to them, and a precious gift it was, a right-hand blessing. 3. It was an instance of the special kindness he had for them. *Yea, he loved the people*, (v. 3.) and therefore, though it was a fiery law, yet it is said to go

*for them*, (v. 2.) that is, in favour to them. Note, The law of God written in the heart, is a certain evidence of the love of God shed abroad there: we must reckon God's law one of the gifts of his grace. Yea, he loved the people, or *laid them in his bosom*; so the word signifies, which denotes not only the dearest love, but the most tender and careful protection. *All his saints were in his hand*. Some understand it particularly of his supporting them and preserving them alive at mount Sinai, when the terror was so great, that Moses himself quaked; they heard the voice of God and lived, ch. 4. 33. Or, it denotes his forming them into a people by his law; he moulded and managed them as the potter does the clay. Or, they were in his hand to be covered and protected, used and disposed of, as the seven stars were in the hand of Christ, Rev. 1. 16. Note, God has *all his saints in his hands*; and though there are *ten thousands of his saints*, (v. 2.) yet his hand, with which he measures the waters, is large enough, and strong enough, to hold them all, and we may be sure that *none can pluck them out of his hand*, John 10. 28.

III. He disposed them to receive the law which he gave them; *they sat down at thy feet*, as scholars at the feet of their master, in token of reverence, in attendance and humble submission to what is taught; so Israel sat at the foot of mount Sinai, and promised to hear and do whatever God should say. They were *struck to thy feet*, so some read it; namely, By the terrors of mount Sinai, which greatly humbled them for the present, Exod. 20. 19. Every one then stood ready to receive God's words, and did so again when the law was publicly read to them, as Josh. 8. 34. It is a great privilege when we have heard the words of God, to have an opportunity of hearing them again, John 17. 26, *I have declared thy name, and will declare it*. So Israel not only had received the law, but should still receive it by their prayers, and other lively oracles.

The people are taught, (v. 4, 5.) in gratitude for the law of God, always to keep up an honourable remembrance both of the law itself, and of Moses by whom it was given. Two of the Chaldee paraphrasts read it, *The children of Israel said, Moses commanded us a law*; and the Jews say, that as soon as a child was able to speak, his father was obliged to teach him these words; *Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob*.

1. They are taught to speak with great respect of the law, and to call it, *the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob*. They looked upon it, (1.) As peculiar to them, and that by which they were distinguished from other nations, who neither had the knowledge of it, (Ps. 147. 20.) nor, if they had, were under those obligations to observe it that Israel were under: and therefore (says Bishop Patrick) "when the Jews conquered any country, they did not force any to embrace the law of Moses, but only to submit to the seven precepts of Noah." (2.) As entailed upon them; for so inheritances are to be transmitted to their posterity. And, (3.) As their wealth and true treasure. Those that enjoy the word of God and the means of grace, have reason to say, We have a goodly heritage. He is indeed a rich man, in whom the word of Christ dwells richly. Perhaps the law is called their *inheritance*, because it was given them with their inheritance, and was so annexed to it, that the forsaking of the law would be a forfeiture of the inheritance. See Ps. 119. 111.

2. They are taught to speak with great respect of Moses; and they were the more obliged to keep up his name, because he had not provided for the keeping of it up in his family; his posterity was

never called the *sons of Moses*, as the priests were, the *sons of Aaron*. (1.) They must own Moses a great benefactor to their nation, in that he *commanded them the law*; for though it came from the hand of God, it went through the hand of Moses. (2.) *He was king in Jeshurun*. Having *commanded them the law*, as long as he lived, he took care to see it observed and put in execution; and they were very happy in having such a king, who ruled them, and went in and out before them at all times, but did in a special manner look great, when the *heads of the people were gathered together* in parliament, as it were, and Moses was president among them. Some understand this of God himself; he did then declare himself their King, when he gave them the law, and he continued so, as long as they were *Jeshurun*, an upright people, and till they rejected him, 1 Sam. 12. 12. But it seems rather to be understood of Moses. A good government is a great blessing to any people, and what they have reason to be very thankful for; and that constitution is very happy, which, as Israel's, which, as our's, divides the power between the king in Jeshurun and the heads of the tribes, when they are gathered together.

6. Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few. 7. And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou a help to him from his enemies.

Here is,

I. The blessing of Reuben. Though Reuben had lost the honour of his birthright, yet Moses begins with him; for we should not insult over them that are disgraced, nor desire to perpetuate marks of infamy upon any, though ever so justly fastened at first, v. 6. Moses desires and foretells, 1. The preserving of this tribe, though a frontier tribe on the other side Jordan, yet, "*Let it live*, and not be either ruined by its neighbours, or lost among them." And perhaps he refers to those chosen men of that tribe, who, having had their lot assigned them already, left their families in it, and were now ready to *go over armed before their brethren*, Numb. 32. 27. "Let them be protected in this noble expedition, and their heads covered in the day of battle." 2. The increase of this tribe, *Let not his men be few*; or, *Let his men be a number*, "Let it be a numerous tribe; though their other honours be lost, so that they shall not excel, yet let them multiply." *Let Reuben live, and not die, though his men be few*; so Bishop Patrick thinks it may be rendered. "Though he must not expect to flourish, (Gen. 49. 4.) yet let him not perish." All the Chaldee paraphrasts refer this to the other world; *Let Reuben live in life eternal, and not die the second death*: so Onkelos. *Let Reuben live in this world, and not die that death which the wicked die in the world to come*: so Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum.

II. The blessing of Judah; which is put before Levi, because our Lord *sprang out of Judah*, and (as Dr. Lightfoot says) because of the dignity of the kingdom above the priesthood. The blessing, (v. 7.) may refer, either, 1. To the whole tribe in general. Moses prays for, and prophesies, the great prosperity of that tribe. That God would hear his prayers, (see an instance, 2 Chron. 13. 14. 15.) settle him in his lot, prosper him in all his affairs, and give him victory over his enemies. It is taken for granted, that the tribe of Judah would be both a praying tribe and an active tribe. "Lord," says Moses, "hear his prayers, and give success to all

his undertakings; *let his hands be sufficient for him*, both in husbandry and in war." The voice of prayer should always be attended with the hand of endeavour, and then we may expect prosperity, Or, 2. It may refer in particular to David, as a type of Christ; that God would hear his prayers, Ps. 20. 1. (and Christ was heard always, John 11. 42.) that he would give him victory over his enemies, and success in his great undertakings. See Ps. 89, 20, &c. And that prayer that God would bring him to his people, seems to refer to Jacob's prophecies concerning Shiloh, That to him should the gathering of the people be, Gen. 49. 10.

The tribe of Simeon is omitted in the blessing, because Jacob had left it under a brand, and it had never done any thing, as Levi had done, to retrieve its honour. It was lessened in the wilderness more than any other of the tribes; and Zimri, who was so notoriously guilty in the matter of Peor but the other day, was of that tribe. Or, because the lot of Simeon was an appendage to that of Judah, that tribe is included in the blessing of Judah. Some copies of the LXX join Simeon with Reuben, *Let Reuben live and not die; and let Simeon be many in number*.

8. And of Levi he said, *Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one*, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; 9. Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. 10. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar. 11. Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Moses is large in blessing the tribe of Levi, not so much because it was his own tribe, (for he takes no notice of his relation to it,) as because it was God's tribe. The blessing of Levi has reference,

I. To the High Priest, here called God's *holy one*, (v. 8.) because his office was holy, in token of which, *Holiness to the Lord* was written upon his forehead. 1. He seems to acknowledge, that God might justly have displaced Aaron and his seed, for his sin at Meribah, Numb. 20. 12. So many understand it. It is rather probable to me, that, on the contrary, he pleads with God the zeal and faithfulness of Aaron, and his boldness in stemming the tide of the people's murmurings at the other Meribah, (Exod. 17. 7.) which might be very remarkable, and which God might have an eye to in conferring the priesthood upon him, though no mention is made of it there. All the Chaldee paraphrasts agree, that it was a trial in which he was found perfect and faithful, and stood in the trial; therefore not that, Numb. 20. 2. He prays that the office of the High Priest might ever remain, *Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with him*. It was given him for some eminent piece of service, as appears, (Mal. 2. 5.) "Lord, let it never be taken from him." Notwithstanding this blessing, the Urim and Thummim were lost in the captivity, and never restored under the second temple; but it has its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, God's



Holy One, and our great High Priest, of whom Aaron was a type: with him who had lain in the Father's bosom from eternity, the Urim and Thummim shall remain; for he is the wonderful and everlasting Counsellor. Some translate the Thummim and Urim appellatively; the rather because the usual order is here inverted, and here only. *Thummim* signifies *integrity*, and *Urim*, *illumination*; *Let these be with thy holy one*, that is, "Lord, let the High Priest ever be both an upright man and an understanding man." A good prayer to be put up for the ministers of the gospel, that they may have clear heads and honest hearts; light and sincerity make a complete minister.

II. To the inferior priests and Levites, *v. 9. 11.*

1. He commends the zeal of this tribe for God, when they sided with Moses (and so with God) against the worshippers of the golden calf, (Exod. 32. 26, &c.) and being employed in cutting off the ring-leaders in that wickedness, they did it impartially: the best friends they had in the world, though as dear to them as their next relations, they did not spare, if they were idolaters. Note, Our regard to God and his glory, ought always to prevail above our regard to any creature whatsoever. And those who not only keep themselves pure from the common iniquities of the times and places in which they live, but, as they are capable, utter testimony against them, and *stand up for God against the evil-doers*, shall have special marks of honour put upon them. Perhaps Moses may have an eye to the sons of Korah, who refused to join with their father in his gain-saying, Numb. 26. 11. Also to Phinehas, who *executed judgment*, and *stayed the plague*. And indeed, the office of the priests and Levites, which engaged their constant attendance, at least in their turns, at God's altar, laid them under a necessity of being frequently absent from their families, which they could not take such care of, or make such provision for, as other Israelites might. This was the constant self-denial they submitted to, that they might *observe God's word*, and keep the *covenant of priesthood*. Note, These that are called to minister in holy things, must sit loose to the relations and interests that are dearest to them in this world, and prefer the fulfilling of their ministry before the gratifying of the best friend they have, Acts 21. 13.—20. 24. Our Lord Jesus knew not his mother and his brethren, when they would have taken him off from his work, Matth. 12. 48.

2. He confirms the commission granted this tribe to minister in holy things, which was the recompense of their zeal and fidelity, *v. 10. (1.)* They were to deal for God with the people. "*They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy laws*, both as preachers in their religious assemblies, reading and expounding the law, (Neh. 8. 7, 8.) and as judges, determining doubtful and difficult cases that were brought before them," 2 Chron. 17. 8, 9. The priests' lips kept this knowledge for the use of the people, who were to ask the law at their mouth, Mal. 2. 7. Even Haggai, a prophet, consulted the priests in a case of conscience, Hag. 2. 11, &c. Note, Preaching is necessary, not only for the first planting of churches, but for the preserving and edifying of churches when they are planted. See Ezek. 44. 23, 24. (2.) They were to deal for the people with God, in burning incense to the praise and glory of God, and offering sacrifices to make atonement for sin, and to obtain the divine favour. This was the work of the priests, but the Levites attended and assisted in it. Those that would have benefit by their incense and offerings, must diligently and faithfully observe their instructions.

3. He prays for them, *v. 11. (1.)* That God would prosper them in their estates, and make that

which was allotted them for their maintenance, comfortable to them. *Bless, Lord, his substance*. The provision made for them was very plentiful, and came to them easily, and yet they could have no joy of it unless God blessed it to them, and since God himself was their portion, a particular blessing might be expected to attend this portion. *Bless, Lord, his virtue*; so some read it, "Lord, increase thy graces in them, and make them more and more fit for their work." (2.) That he would accept them in their services. "*Accept the work of his hands*, both for himself, and for the people for whom he ministers." Acceptance with God is that which we should all aim at, and be ambitious of, in all our devotions, whether men accept us or no, (2 Cor. 5. 9.) and it is the most valuable blessing we can desire either for ourselves or others. (3.) That he would take his part against all his enemies, *smite through the loins of them that rise against him*. He supposes that God's ministers would have many enemies; some would hate their persons for their faithfulness, and would endeavour to do them a mischief; others would envy them their maintenance, and endeavour sacrilegiously to deprive them of it; others would expose them in the execution of their office, and not submit to the sentence of the priests; and some would aim to overthrow the office itself. Now he prays that God would blast all such attempts, and return the mischief upon the heads of the authors. This prayer is a prophecy that God would certainly reckon with those that are enemies to his ministers, and will keep up a ministry in his church to the end of time, in spite of all the designs of the gates of hell against it. Saul rose up against the Lord's priests, (1 Sam. 22. 18.) and it filled the measure of his sin.

12. And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. 13. And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, 14. And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, 15. And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, 16. And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. 17. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

Here is,

I. The blessing of Benjamin, *v. 12.* Benjamin is put next to Levi, because the temple where the priests' work lay, was just upon the edge of the lot of this tribe; and it is put before Joseph, because of the dignity of Jerusalem (part of which was in this tribe) above Samaria, which was in the tribe of Ephraim, and because Benjamin adhered to the house of David, and to the temple of the Lord,

when the rest of the tribes deserted both with Jeroboam. 1. Benjamin is here called the *beloved of the Lord*, as the father of this tribe was Jacob's beloved son, the *son of his right hand*. Note, Those are blessed indeed, that are beloved of the Lord. Saul, the first king, and Paul, the great apostle, were both of this tribe. 2. He is here assured of the divine protection; he shall *dwell safely*. Note, Those are safe, whom God loves, Ps. 91. 1. 3. It is here intimated, that the temple in which God would dwell, should be built in the borders of this tribe. Jerusalem the holy city, was in the lot of this tribe, (Josh. 18. 28.) and though Zion, the city of David, is supposed to belong to Judah, yet mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, was in Benjamin's lot. God is *therefore* said to dwell *between his shoulders*, because the temple stood on that mount, as the head of a man upon his shoulders. And by this means Benjamin was *covered all the day long* under the protection of the sanctuary, (Ps. 125. 2.) which is often spoken of as a place of refuge, Ps. 27. 4, 5. Neh. 6. 10. Benjamin dwelling by the temple of God, *dwelt in safety by him*. Note, It is a happy thing to be in the neighbourhood of the temple. This situation of Benjamin, it is likely, was the only thing that kept that tribe close with Judah to the divine institutions, when the other ten tribes apostatized. Those have corrupt and wicked hearts indeed, who, the *nearer* they are to the church, are so much the *further from God*.

II. The blessing of Joseph, including both Manasseh and Ephraim. In Jacob's blessing, (Gen. 49.) that of Joseph is the largest, and so it is here; and from thence Moses here borrows the title he gives to Joseph, (v. 13.) that he was *separated from his brethren*, or, as it might be read, a *Nazarite among them*, both in regard of his piety, wherein it appears, by many instances, he excelled them all; and of his dignity in Egypt, where he was both their ruler and benefactor; his brethren separated him from them by making him a slave, but God distinguished him from them by making him a prince.

Now the blessings here prayed for, and prophesied of, for this tribe, are, great plenty, and great power.

1. *Great plenty*, v. 13..16. In general, *Blessed of the Lord be his land*. They were very fruitful countries that fell into the lot of Ephraim and Manasseh, yet Moses prays they might be watered with the blessing of God, which makes rich, and on which all fruitfulness depends.

Now, (1.) He enumerates many particulars which he prays may contribute to the wealth and abundance of those two tribes, looking up to the Creator for the benefit and serviceableness of all the inferior creatures, for they are all that to us, which he makes them to be. He prays, [1.] For *seasonable rains*, and dews, *the precious things of heaven*; and so precious they are, though but pure water, that without them the fruits of the earth would all fail and be cut off. [2.] For *plentiful springs*, which help to make the earth fruitful, called here *the deep that coucheth beneath*; both are the *rivers of God*, (Ps. 65. 9.) for he is the Father of the rain, (Job 38. 28.) and he made particularly the *fountains of water*, Rev. 14. 7. [3.] For the *benign influences* of the heavenly bodies; (v. 14.) for the *precious fruits* (the word signifies that which is most excellent, and the best in its kind) *put forth by* the quickening heat of the *sun*, and the cooling moisture of the *moon*. "Let them have the yearly fruits of their several months, according to the course of nature, in one month olives, in another dates," &c. So some understand it. [4.] For the fruitfulness even of their hills and mountains, which in other countries used to be barren, (v. 15.) let them have the *chief things of the ancient mountains*; and if the

mountains be fruitful, the fruits on *them* will be first and best ripened. They are called *ancient mountains*, not because prior in time to other mountains, but because, like the first-born, they were superior in worth and excellency; and *lasting hills*, not only because as other mountains they were unmoveable, (Hab. 3. 6.) but because the fruitfulness of them should continue. [5.] For the productions of the lower grounds, v. 16, *For the precious things of the earth*. Though the earth itself seems a useless worthless lump of matter, yet there are precious things produced out of it, for the support and comfort of human life, Job 28. 5. *Out of it cometh bread*, because out of it came our bodies, and to it they must return. But what are the *precious things of the earth* to a soul that came from God, and must return to him? Or, what is its fulness to the fulness that is in Christ, whence we receive grace for grace? Some make these precious things here prayed for to be figures of *spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ*, the gifts, graces, and comforts, of the Spirit.

(2.) He crowns all with the good-will, or favourable acceptance, of him that *dwelt in the bush*, (v. 16.) that is, of God, that God who appeared to Moses in the bush that burned and was not consumed, (Exod. 3. 2.) to give him his commission for the bringing of Israel out of Egypt. Though God's glory appeared there but for a while, yet it is said to *dwell* there, because it continued as long as there was occasion for it: *The good-will of the Shechinah in the bush*; so it might be read, for *Shechinah* signifies that which *dwelleth*; and though it was but a little while a dweller *in the bush*, yet it continued to dwell with the people of Israel. *My Dweller in the bush*; so it should be rendered: that was an appearance of the Divine Majesty to Moses only, in token of the particular interest he had in God, which he desires to improve for the good of this tribe. Many a time God had appeared to Moses, but now that he is just dying, he seems to have the most pleasing remembrance of that, which was that time, when his acquaintance with the visions of the Almighty first began, and his correspondence with heaven was first settled, that was a time of love never to be forgotten. It was at the bush that God declared himself the *God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and so confirmed the promise made to the fathers, that promise which reached as far as the resurrection of the body and eternal life, as appears by our Saviour's argument from it, Luke 20. 37. So that when he prays for the good-will of him that *dwelt in the bush*, he has an eye to the covenant then and there renewed, on which all our hopes of God's favour must be bottomed. Now he concludes this large blessing with a prayer for the favour and good-will of God. [1.] Because that is the fountain and spring-head of all these blessings; they are the gifts of God's good-will, they are so to his own people, whatever they are to others. Indeed, when Ephraim, (a descendant from Joseph) slid back from God, as a *backsliding heifer*, those fruits of his country were so far from being the gifts of God's good-will, that they were intended but to fatten him for the slaughter, as a *lamb in a large place*, Hos. 4. 16, 17. [2.] Because that is the comfort and sweetness of all these blessings; when we have joy of them, when we taste God's good-will in them. [3.] Because that is better than all these, infinitely better; for if we have but the favour and good-will of God, we are happy, and may be easy in the want of all these things; and may rejoice in the God of our salvation, *though the fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine*, Hab. 3. 17, 18.

2. Great power Joseph is here blessed with, v. 17. Here are three instances of this power foretold. (1.) His authority among his brethren. *His*

glory is like the firstling of his bullock, or a young bull, which is a stately creature, and therefore formerly used as an emblem of royal majesty. Joshua, who was to succeed Moses, was of the tribe of Ephraim the son of Joseph, and his glory was indeed illustrious, and he was an honour to his tribe. In Ephraim was the royal city of the ten tribes afterward. And of Manasseh were Gideon, Jephthah, and Jair, who were all ornaments and blessings to their country. Some think he is compared to the firstling of the bullock, because the birthright which Reuben lost, devolved upon Joseph, (1 Chron. 5. 1, 2.) and to the firstling of his bullock, because Bashan, which was in the lot of Manasseh, was famous for bulls and cows, Ps. 22. 12. Amos 4. 1. (2.) His force against his enemies and victory over them; *his horns are like the horn of an unicorn*, that is, "The forces he shall bring into the field, shall be very strong and formidable, and *with them he shall push the people*," that is, "He shall overcome all that stand in his way." It appears from the Ephraimites' contests, both with Gideon (Judg. 8. 1.) and with Jephthah, (Judg. 12. 1.) that they were a warlike tribe and fierce. Yet we find the children of Ephraim, when they had forsaken the covenant of God, though they were armed, *turning back in the day of battle*, (Ps. 78. 9, 10.) for though here pronounced *strong and bold as unicorns*, when God was departed from them, they became as weak as other men. (3.) The numbers of his people, in which Ephraim, though the younger house, exceeded, Jacob having, in the foresight of the same thing, crossed hands, Gen. 48. 19, *They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh*. Jonathan's Targum applies it to the ten thousands of Canaanites conquered by Joshua, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, and the thousands of Midianites conquered by Gideon, who was of the tribe of Manasseh. And the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon the former part of this verse is observable; that "as the firstlings of the bullock were never to be worked, nor could the unicorn ever be tamed, so Joseph should ever continue free, they would have continued free, if they had not by sin sold themselves."

18. And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. 19. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. 20. And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. 21. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

Here we have,

I. The blessings of Zebulun and Issachar put together, for they were both the sons of Jacob by Leah, and by their lot in Canaan they were neighbours; it is foretold,

1. That they should both have a comfortable settlement and employment, v. 18. Zebulun must rejoice, for he shall have cause to rejoice; and Moses prays that he may have cause in his going out, either to war, for *Zebulun jeopardied their lives in the high places of the field*, (Judg. 5. 18.) or rather to sea, for Zebulun was a *haven of ships*, Gen. 49. 13. And Issachar must rejoice in his tents, that is,

in his business at home, his husbandry, to which the men of that tribe generally confined themselves, because they saw that rest was good, and when the sea was rough, the land was pleasant, Gen. 49. 14, 15. Observe here, (1.) That the providence of God, as it variously appoints the bounds of men's habitations, some in the city, and some in the country, some in the sea-ports, and some in the inland towns, so it wisely disposes men's inclinations to different employments for the good of the public, as each member of the body is situated and qualified for the service of the whole. The genius of some men leads them to a book, of others, to the sea, of others, to the sword; some are inclined to rural affairs, others to trade, and some have a turn for mechanics; and it is well it is so; *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?* 1 Cor. 12. 17. It was for the common good of Israel, that the men of Zebulun were merchants, and that the men of Issachar were husbandmen. (2.) That whatever our place and business are, it is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to it, and it is a great happiness to be well pleased with it. Let Zebulun rejoice in his going out; let him thank God for the gains, and make the best of the losses and inconveniences, of his merchandise, and not despise the meanness, or envy the quietness, of Issachar's tents: let *Issachar rejoice in his tents*, let him be well pleased with the retirements, and content with the small profits, of his country seats, and not grudge that he has not Zebulun's pleasure of travelling, and profit of trading. Every business has both its conveniences and its inconveniences, and therefore whatever Providence has made our business we ought to bring our minds to it; and it is really a great happiness, whatever our lot is, to be easy with it. *This is the gift of God*, Eccl. 5. 19.

2. That they should both be serviceable in their places to the honour of God, and the interests of religion in the nation, v. 19. *They shall call the people to the mountain*, that is, to the temple which Moses foresaw should be built upon a mountain. I see not why this should be confined (as it is by most interpreters) to Zebulun; if both Zebulun and Issachar receive the comforts of their respective employments, why may we not suppose that they both took care to give God the glory of them? Two things they shall do for God.

(1.) They shall invite others to the service; *call the people to the mountain*. [1.] Zebulun shall improve his acquaintance and commerce with the neighbouring nations, to whom he goes out, for this noble purpose, to propagate religion among them, and to invite them into the service of the God of Israel. Note, Men of great business, or large conversation, should wisely and zealously endeavour to recommend the practice of serious godliness to those with whom they converse, and among whom their business lies. Such are blessed, for they are blessings. It were well if the enlargement of trade with foreign countries might be made to contribute to the spreading of the gospel. This prophecy concerning Zebulun perhaps looks as far as the preaching of Christ and his apostles, which began in the land of Zebulun, (Matth. 4. 14, 15.) and they *called the people to the mountain*, that is, to the kingdom of the Messiah, which is called the *mountain of the Lord's house*, Isa. 2. 2. [2.] Issachar that tarries at home and dwells in tents, shall call upon his neighbour to go up to the sanctuary, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts; either, because they should be more zealous and forward than their neighbours, (and it has been often observed, that though they that dwell with Zebulun dwell in the haven of ships, which are places of concourse, have commonly more of the *light* of religion, they that with Issachar dwell in tents in the country,

have more of the *life* and *heat* of it,) and may therefore with their zeal provoke those to a holy emulation that have more knowledge; (Ps. 122. 1.) or, because they were more observant of the times appointed for their feasts than others were. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts reads the foregoing verse, *Rejoice, Issachar, in the tents of thy schools*, supposing they would many of them be scholars, and would use their learning for that purpose, according to the revolutions of the year, to give notice of the times of the feasts; for almanacks were not then so common as they are now. And Onkelos more particularly, *Rejoice, Issachar, when thou goest to compute the times of the solemnities at Jerusalem*; for then the tribes of Israel shall be gathered to the mountain of the house of the sanctuary. So he reads the beginning of this verse; and many think this the meaning of that character of the men of Issachar in David's time, *That they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do*, 1 Chron. 12. 32. And the character which follows, (v. 33.) of the men of Zebulun, that they were such as *went forth to battle, expert in war*, perhaps may explain the blessing of that tribe here. Note, Those that have not opportunity as Zebulun had of bringing into the church those that are without, may yet be very serviceable to its interest, by helping to quicken, encourage, and build up, those that are within. And it is good work to call people to God's ordinances, to put those in remembrance that are forgetful, and to stir up those that are slothful, who will follow, but care not to lead.

(2.) They shall not only invite others to the service of God, but they shall abound in it themselves; *there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness*. They shall not send others to the temple, and stay at home themselves, under pretence that they cannot leave their business; but when they stir up others to go *speedily to pray before the Lord*, they shall say, *We will go also*, as it is Zech. 8. 21. Note, The good we exhort others to, we should ourselves be examples of. And when they come to the temple, they shall not appear before the Lord empty, but shall bring for the honour and service of God according as he has prospered them, 1 Cor. 16. 2. [1.] It is here foretold that both these tribes should grow rich, Zebulun that goes abroad, shall *suck of the abundance of the seas* which are full breasts to the merchants, while Issachar that carries at home, shall enrich himself with *treasures hid in the sand*; either the fruits of the earth, or the underground treasures of metals and minerals, or, (because the word for sand here signifies properly the sand of the sea,) the rich things thrown up by the sea, for the lot of Issachar reached to the sea-side. Perhaps their success in *calling the people to the mount*, is intimated by their *sucking of the abundance of the seas*, for we have the like phrase used for the bringing in of the nations to the church, (Isa. 60. 5.) *The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee*, and (v. 16.) *Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles*. It is foretold, [2.] that these tribes, being thus enriched, should *consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth*, Mic. 4. 13. That the merchandise of Zebulun, and the hire of Issachar, should be *holiness to the Lord*, (Isa. 23. 18.) for they shall out of it *offer sacrifices of righteousness*, that is, sacrifices according to the law. Note, We must serve and honour God with what we have; and where he sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly. Those that *suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand*, ought to offer sacrifices of righteousness proportionable.

II. The blessing of the tribe of Gad comes next, v. 20, 21. This was one of the tribes that was al-

ready seated on that side Jordan where Moses now was. Now,

1. He foretells what this tribe would be, v. 20. (1.) That it would be enlarged, as at present it had a spacious allotment; and he gives God the glory both of its present and of its future extent. *Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad*. We find how this tribe was enlarged by their success in war, which it seems they carried on very religiously against the Hagarites, 1 Chron. 5. 19, 20, 22. Note, God is to have the glory of all our enlargements. (2.) That it would be a valiant and victorious tribe; would, if let alone, dwell secure and fearless as a lion; but, if provoked, would, like a lion, *tear the arm with the crown of the head*; that is, would pull in pieces all that stood in his way, both the arm, that is, the strength, and the crown of the head, that is, the policy and authority of his enemies. In David's time there were Gadites whose faces were *as the faces of lions*, 1 Chron. 12. 8. Some reckon Jehu to be of this tribe, because the first mention we have of him is at Ramoth-Gilead, which belonged to Gad, and they think this may refer to his valiant acts.

He commends this tribe for what they had done, and were now doing, v. 21. (1.) They had done wisely for themselves, when they chose their lot with the first, in a country already conquered. *He provided the first part for himself*; though he had a concern for his brethren, yet his charity began at home, and he was willing to see himself first served, first settled. The Gadites were the first and most active movers for an allotment on that side Jordan, and therefore are still mentioned before the Reubenites in the history of that affair, Numb. 32. 2. And thus, while the other tribes had their portion assigned them by Joshua the conqueror, Gad and his companions had their's from Moses the lawgiver, and in it they were scated by law; or, (as the word is,) *covered* or protected by a special providence which watched over them that were left behind, while the men of war went forward with their brethren. Note, *Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself*, (when thou providest first for thyself, as Gad did,) Ps. 49. 18. And God will praise thee when thou doest well for thy soul, which is indeed thyself, and providest the first part for that in a portion for the lawgiver. (2.) They were now doing honestly and bravely for their brethren; for they *came with the heads of the people*, before whom they went armed over Jordan, to *execute the justice of the Lord* upon the Canaanites, under the conduct of Joshua, to whom we afterward find they solemnly vowed obedience, Josh. 1. 12, 16. This was what they undertook to do when they had their lot assigned them, Numb. 32. 27. This they did, Josh. 4. 12. And when the wars of Canaan were ended, Joshua dismissed them with a blessing; Josh. 22. 7. Note, It is a blessed and honourable thing to be helpful to our brethren in their affairs; and particularly to assist in executing the justice of the Lord, by suppressing that which is provoking to him: this was it that was counted to Phinehas for righteousness.

22. And of Dan he said, *Dan is a lion's whelp*: he shall leap from Bashan. 23. And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south. 24. And of Asher he said, *Let Asher be blessed with children*; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. 25. Thy shoes *shall be iron and brass*; and as thy days, *so shall thy strength be*.

Here is,

I. The blessing of Dan, *v.* 22. Jacob in his blessing had compared him to a serpent for subtlety; Moses compares him to a lion for courage and resolution: and what could stand before those that had the head of a serpent and the heart of a lion? He is compared to the lions that leapt from Bashan, a mountain noted for fierce lions, from whence they came down to leap upon their prey in the plains. This may refer either, 1. To the particular victories obtained by Samson (who was of this tribe) over the Philistines; *the Spirit of the Lord began to move him in the camp of Dan*, when he was very young, as a *lion's whelp*, so that in his attacks upon the Philistines he surprised them, and overpowered them by main strength, as a lion does his prey; and one of his first exploits was the rending of a lion. Or, 2. To a more general achievement of that tribe, when a party of them, upon information brought them of the security of Laish, which lay in the furthest part of the land of Canaan from them, surprised it, and soon made themselves master of it. See *Judg.* 18. 27. And the mountains of Bashan lying not far from that city, probably from thence they made their descent upon it; and therefore are here said to *leap from Bashan*.

II. The blessing of Naphtali, *v.* 23. He looks upon this tribe with wonder, and applauds it. "O Naphtali, thou art happy, thou shalt be so, mayest thou ever be so!" Three things make up the happiness of this tribe. 1. Be thou *satisfied with favour*. Some understand it of the favour of men, their good-will and good word; Jacob had described this tribe to be, generally, courteous obliging people, giving goodly words, as the loving hind, *Gen.* 49. 21. Now what should they get by being so? Moses here tells them they should have an interest in the affections of their neighbours, and be satisfied with favour. They that are loving, shall be beloved. But others understand it of the favour of God; and with good reason: for that only is the favour that is satisfying to the soul, and puts true gladness into the heart. Those are happy indeed, that have the favour of God; and those shall have it, that place their satisfaction in it, and reckon that, in having that, they have enough, and desire no more. 2. Be thou *full with the blessing of the Lord*, that is, not only with those good things that are the fruits of the blessing, corn and wine and oil, but with the blessing itself; that is, the grace of God, according to his promise and covenant. Those who have that blessing, may well reckon themselves full, they need nothing else to make them happy. "The portion of the tribe of Naphtali," (the Jews say,) was so fruitful, and the productions so forward, though it lay north, that they of that tribe were generally the first that brought their first-fruits to the temple; and so they had first the blessing from the priest, which was the blessing of the Lord." Capernaum, in which Christ chiefly resided, lay in this tribe. 3. Be thou *in possession of the sea and the south*; so it may be read, that is, of that sea which shall lie south of thy lot, that was the sea of Galilee; which we so often read of in the gospels, directly north of which the lot of this tribe lay; and which was of great advantage to this tribe, witness the wealth of Capernaum and Bethsaida, which lay within this tribe, and upon the shore of that sea. See how Moses was guided by a spirit of prophecy in these blessings; for before the lot was cast into the lap, he foresaw and foretold how the disposal of it would be.

III. The blessing of Asher, *v.* 24, 25. Four things he prays for, and prophesies concerning this tribe, which carries blessedness in its name; for Leah called the father of it *Asher*, saying, *Happy am I*, *Gen.* 30. 13. 1. The increase of their numbers.

They are now a numerous tribe, *Numb.* 26. 47. Let it be more so; *Let Asher be blessed with children*. Note, Children, especially children of the covenant, are blessings, not burthens. 2. Their interest in their neighbours; *Let him be acceptable to his brethren*. Note, It is a very desirable thing to have the love and good-will of those we live among; it is what we should pray to God for, who has all hearts in his hand; and what we should endeavour to gain by meekness and humility, and a readiness, as we have ability and opportunity, to do good to all men. 3. The richness of their land. (1.) Above-ground; *Let him dip his foot in oil*, that is, "Let him have such plenty of it in his lot, that he may not only anoint his head with it, but, if he pleases, wash his feet in it," which was not commonly done; yet we find our blessed Saviour so acceptable to his brethren, that his feet were anointed with the most *precious ointment*, *Luke* 7. 46. (2.) Under-ground; *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass*, that is, "Thou shalt have great plenty of these metals (mines of them) in thine own ground, which by an uncommon blessing shall have both its surface and its bowels rich;" or, if they had them not as the productions of their own country, they should have them imported from abroad: for the lot of this tribe lay on the sea coast. The Chaldee paraphrasts understand it figuratively; "Thou shalt be strong and bright, as iron and brass." 4. The continuance of their strength and vigour; *as thy days, so shall thy strength be*. Many paraphrase it thus, "The strength of thine old age shall be like that of thy youth; thou shalt not feel a decay, nor be the worse for the wearing, but shalt renew thy youth; as if not thy shoes only, but thy bones, were iron and brass." The day is often in scripture put for the events of the day; and taking it so here, it is a promise that God would graciously support them under their trials and troubles, whatever they were. And so it is a promise sure to all the spiritual seed of Abraham, that God will wisely proportion their graces and comforts to the services and sufferings he calls them out to. Have they work appointed them? They shall have strength to do it. Have they burthens appointed them? They shall have strength to bear them; and never be *tempted above that they are able*. *Faithful is he that has thus promised, and hath caused us to hope* in this promise.

26. *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.* 27. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, *Destroy them*. 28. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. 29. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee: and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

These are the last words of all that ever Moses, that great writer, that great dictator, either wrote himself, or were written from him, and they are therefore very remarkable; and, no doubt, we shall find them very improving. Moses, the man of God, (who had as much reason as ever any mere man had to know both,) with his last breath magnifies

both the God of Israel, and the Israel of God. They are both incomparable in his eye; and we are sure that in this his judgment of both, his eye did not wax dim.

I. No God like the God of Israel. None of the gods of the nations were capable of doing that for their worshippers which Jehovah did for his, (v. 26.) *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun*. Note, When we are expecting that God should bless us in doing well for us, we must bless him by speaking well of him; and one of the most solemn ways of praising God, is, by acknowledging that there is none like him. Now, 1. This was the honour of Israel; every nation boasted of its god, but none had such a God to boast of as Israel had. 2. It was their happiness, that they were taken into covenant with such a God. Two things he takes notice of as proofs of the incontestable pre-eminence of the God of Jeshurun above all other gods. (1.) His sovereign power and authority; *he rides upon the heavens*, and with the greatest state and magnificence on the skies. *Riding on the heavens* denotes his greatness and glory, in which he manifests himself to the upper world, and the use he makes of the influences of heaven, and the productions of the clouds, in bringing to pass his own counsels in this lower world: he manages and directs them as a man does the horse he rides on. When he has any thing to do for his people, he *rides upon the heavens* to do it; for he does it swiftly and strongly, no enemy can either anticipate or obstruct the progress of him that rides on the heavens. (2.) His boundless eternity; he is the eternal God, and his arms are *everlasting*, v. 27. The gods of the heathen were but lately invented, and would shortly perish; but the God of Jeshurun is eternal, he was before all worlds, and will be when time and days shall be no more. See Hab. 1. 12.

II. No people like the Israel of God. Having pronounced each tribe happy, in the close he pronounces all together very happy; so happy in all respects, that there was no nation under the sun comparable to them; (v. 29.) *Happy art thou, O Israel*, a people whose God is the Lord; on that account truly happy, and *none like unto thee*. If Israel honour God as a none-such God, he will favour them, so as to make them a none-such people, the envy of all their neighbours, and the joy of all their well-wishers. *Who is like unto thee, O people? Behold thou art fair, my love!* says Christ of his spouse. To which she presently returns, *Behold thou art fair, my beloved. What one nation* (no, not all the nations together) *is like thy people Israel?* 2 Sam. 7. 23. What is here said of the church of Israel and the honours and privileges of it, is certainly to be applied to *the church of the first-born*, that are written in heaven. The christian church is the Israel of God, as the apostle calls it, (Gal. 5. 16.) on which there shall be peace, and which is dignified above all societies in the world, as Israel was.

1. Never was people so well seated, and sheltered, v. 27, *The eternal God is thy refuge!* Or, as the word signifies, *thy habitation, or mansion-house*, in whom thou art safe and easy, and at rest, as a man in his own house." Every Israelite, indeed, is at home in God; the soul returns to him, and reposes in him as its resting-place, (Ps. 116. 7.) its hiding-place, Ps. 32. 7. And they that make him their habitation, shall have all the comforts and benefits of a habitation in him, Ps. 91. 1. Moses had an eye to God as the habitation of Israel, when they were wandering in the wilderness, (Ps. 90. 1.) *Lord thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations*. And now that they were going to settle in Canaan, they must not change their habitation; still they will need, and still they shall have, the eternal God for

their dwelling-place; without him Canaan itself would be a wilderness, and a land of darkness.

2. Never was people so well supported and born up; *underneath are the everlasting arms*; that is, the almighty power of God is engaged for the protection and consolation of all that trust in him, in their greatest straits and distresses, and under their heaviest burthens. The everlasting arms shall support, (1.) The interests of the church in general, that they shall not sink, or be run down; underneath the church is that Rock of ages on which it is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, Matth. 16. 18. (2.) The spirits of particular believers, so that though they may be oppressed, they shall not be overwhelmed by any trouble. How low soever the people of God are at any time brought, everlasting arms are underneath them to keep the spirit from sinking, from fainting, and the faith from failing, even when they are pressed above measure. The everlasting covenant, and the everlasting consolations that flow from it, are indeed everlasting arms, with which believers have been wonderfully sustained, and kept cheerful in the worst of times; divine grace is sufficient for them. 2 Cor. 12. 9.

3. Never was people so well commanded and led on to battle; *"He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee by his almighty power which will make room for thee, and by a commission which will bear thee out, he shall say, Destroy them."* They were now entering upon a land that was in the full possession of a strong and formidable people, and who being at first planters, looked upon themselves as its rightful owners; how shall Israel justify, and how shall they accomplish, the expulsion of them? (1.) God will give them a commission to destroy the Canaanites, and that will justify them, and bear them out in it, against all the world. He that is sovereign Lord of all lives and all lands, not only allowed and permitted, but expressly commanded and appointed, the children of Israel both to take possession of the land of Canaan, and to put to the sword the people of Canaan, which, being thus authorized, they might not only lawfully but honourably do, without incurring the least stain or imputation of theft by the one, or murder by the other. (2.) God will give them power and ability to destroy them; nay, he will in effect do it to their hands: *he will thrust out the enemy from before thee*; for the very fear of Israel shall put them to flight. *God drove out the heathen to plant his people*, Ps. 44. 2. Thus believers are more than conquerors over their spiritual enemies, through Christ that loved them. The Captain of our salvation *thrust out the enemy from before us*, when he overcame the world, and spoiled principalities and powers on the cross: and the word of command to us is, *"Destroy them; pursue the victory, and you shall divide the spoil."*

4. Never was people so well secured and protected, (v. 28.) *Israel shall then dwell in safety alone*. Those that dwell in God, and make his name their strong tower, *dwell in safety; the place of their defence is the munitions of rocks*, Isa. 33. 16. They shall dwell in safety alone. (1.) *Though alone*; though they contract no alliances with their neighbours, nor have any reason to expect help or succour from any of them, yet they shall *dwell in safety*; they shall really be safe, and they shall think themselves so. (2.) *Because alone*; they shall *dwell in safety*, as long as they continue pure, and unmixed with the heathen, a singular and peculiar people. Their distinction from other nations, though it made them *like a speckled bird*, (Jer. 12. 9.) and exposed them to the ill-will of those about them, yet it was really their preservation from the mischief their neighbours wished them, as it kept them under the divine protection. All that keep



close to God, shall be kept safe by him. It is promised, that in the kingdom of Christ, *Israel shall dwell safely*, Jer. 23. 6.

5. Never was people so well provided for; the *fountain of Jacob*, that is, the present generation of that people, which is as the fountain to all the streams that shall hereafter descend and be derived from it, shall now presently be fixed upon a good land. *The eye of Jacob* (so it might be read, for the same word signifies a fountain and an eye) *is upon the land of corn and wine*, that is, where they now lay encamped, they had Canaan in their eye, it was just before their faces, on the other side of the river, and they would have it in their hands, and under their feet quickly. This land which they had their eye upon, was blessed both with the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven; it was a *land of corn and wine*, substantial and useful productions: also his heavens (as if the heavens were particularly designed to be blessings to that land) *shall drop down dew*, without which, though the soil were ever so good, the corn and wine would soon fail. Every Israelite indeed has his eye, the eye of faith, upon the better country; the heavenly Canaan, which is richly replenished with better things than corn and wine.

6. Never was people so well helped; if they were in any strait, God himself rode upon the heavens for *their help*, v. 26. And they were a *people saved by the Lord*, v. 29. If they were in danger of any harm, or in want of any good, they had an eternal God to go to, an almighty Power to trust to; nothing could hurt those whom God helped, nor was it possible that that people should perish which *was saved by the Lord*. They that are added to the gospel-Israel, are *such as shall be saved*, Acts 2. 47.

7. Never was people so well armed; God himself was the Shield of their help, by whom they were armed defensively, and sufficiently guarded against all assailants: and he was the *Sword of their excellency*, by whom they were armed offensively, and made both formidable and successful in all their wars. God is called the *Sword of their excellency*, because, in fighting for them, he made them to excel other people: or, because in all he did for them, he had an eye to his sanctuary among them, which is called the *excellency of Jacob*, Ps. 47. 4. Ezek. 28. 21. Amos 6. 8. Those in whose hearts is the excellency of holiness, have God himself for their Shield and Sword, are defended by the whole armour of God; his word is *their sword*, and faith in it, is *their shield*, Eph. 6. 16, 17.

8. Never was people so well assured of victory over their enemies; *They shall be found liars unto thee*; that is, "shall be forced to submit to thee sore against their will, so that it will be but a counterfeit submission; yet the point shall be gained, for thou shalt tread upon their necks," (so the LXX.) which we find done, Josh. 10. 24. "Thou shalt tread down their strong holds, be they never so high; and trample upon their palaces and temples, though esteemed ever so sacred. *If thine enemies be found liars to thee*," (so some read it,) "*thou shalt tread upon their high places*; if they will not be held by the bonds of leagues and treaties, they shall be broken by the force of war." Thus shall the God of peace tread Satan under the feet of all believers, and shall do it *shortly*, Rom. 16. 20.

Now lay all this together, and then you will say, *Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people!* Thrice happy the people whose God is the Lord.

## CHAP. XXXIV.

Having read how Moses finished his *testimony*, we are told here how he immediately after finished his *life*. This chapter could not be written by Moses himself, but was added by Joshua or Eleazar, or, as Bishop Patrick con-

jectures, by Samuel, who was a prophet, and wrote by divine authority what he found in the records of Joshua, and his successors the judges. We have had an account of his dying words, here we have an account of his dying work, and that is work we must all do shortly, and it had need be *well done*. Here is, I. The view Moses had of the land of Canaan just before he died, v. 1. 4. II. His death and burial, v. 5. 6. III. His age, v. 7. IV. Israel's mourning for him, v. 8. V. His successor, v. 9. VI. His character, v. 10. 12.

1. **A**ND Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, 2. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, 3. And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. 4. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go thither

Here is,

1. Moses climbing upward toward heaven, as high as the top of Pisgah, there to die; for that was the place appointed, ch. 32. 49, 50. Israel lay encamped upon the flat grounds in the plains of Moab, and from thence he went up, according to order, to the mountain of Nebo; to the highest point or ridge of that mountain, which was called *Pisgah*, v. 1. Pisgah is an appellative name for all such eminences. It should seem, Moses went up alone to the top of Pisgah, *alone without help*; a sign that his natural force was not abated, when on the last day of his life he could walk up to the top of a high hill without such supporters as once he had when his hands were heavy, (Exod. 17. 12.) *alone without company*; when he had made an end of blessing Israel, we may suppose he solemnly took leave of Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of his friends, who, probably, brought him to the foot of the hill, but then he gave them such a charge as Abraham gave to his servants at the foot of another hill; *Tarry ye here while I go yonder and die*: they must not see him die, because they must not know of his sepulchre. But, whether this was so or not, he went up to the top of Pisgah, 1. To show that he was willing to die: when he knew the place of his death, he was so far from avoiding it, that he cheerfully mounted a steep hill to come at it. Note, Those that through grace are well acquainted with another world, and have been much conversant with it, need not be afraid to leave this. 2. To show that he looked upon death as his ascension. The soul of man, of a good man, when he leaves the body, *goes upward*, (Eccl. 3. 21.) in conformity to which motion of the soul, the body of Moses shall go along with it as far upward as its earth will carry it. When God's servants are sent for out of the world, the summons runs thus, *Go up and die*.

II. Moses looking downward again toward this earth, to see the earthly Canaan into which he must never enter, but therein by faith looking forward to the heavenly Canaan into which he should now immediately enter. God had threatened that he should not come into the possession of Canaan, and the threatening is fulfilled. But he had also promised that he should have a prospect of it, and the promise is here performed; *The Lord showed him all that good land*, v. 1.

1. If he went up alone to the top of Pisgah, yet

ne was not alone, for the Father was with him, John 16. 32. If a man has any friends, he will have them about him when he lies a dying. But if, either through God's providence, or their unkindness, it should so happen, that we should then be alone, we need *fear no evil*, if the great and good Shepherd be with us, Ps. 23. 4.

2. Though his sight was very good, and he had all the advantage of high ground that he could desire for the prospect, yet he could not have seen what he now saw, all Canaan from end to end, (reckoned about 160 miles,) and from side to side, (reckoned about 50 or 60 miles,) if his sight had not been miraculously assisted and enlarged, and therefore it is said, *The Lord showed it him*. Note, All the pleasant prospects we have of the better country we are beholden to the grace of God for; it is he that gives the *Spirit of Wisdom* as well as the *Spirit of Revelation*, the eye as well as the object. This sight which God here gave Moses of Canaan, probably, the Devil designed to mimic, and pretended to out-do, when in an airy phantom he showed to our Saviour, whom he had placed like Moses upon an *exceeding high mountain*, all the kingdoms of the world and glory of them, not gradually, as here, first one country and then another, but all in a moment of time.

3. He saw it at a distance; such a sight the Old Testament saints had of the kingdom of the Messiah, they *saw it afar off*: thus Abraham, long before this, saw Christ's day; and being fully persuaded of it, embraced it in the promise, leaving others to embrace it in the performance, Heb. 11. 13. Such a sight believers now have, through grace, of the bliss and glory of their future state. The word and ordinances are to them what mount Pisgah was to Moses, from thence they have comfortable prospects of the glory to be revealed, and rejoice in hope of it.

4. He saw it, but must never enjoy it. As God sometimes takes his people away from the *evil to come*, so at other times he takes them away from the *good to come*, that is, the good which shall be enjoyed by the church in the present world. Glorious things are spoken of the kingdom of Christ in the latter days, its advancement, enlargement, and flourishing state; we foresee it, but we are not likely to live to see it. Those that shall come after us, we hope, will enter that promised land, which is a comfort to us when we find our own carcasses falling in this wilderness. See 2 Kings 7. 2.

5. He saw all this just before his death. Sometimes God reserves the brightest discoveries of his grace to his people, to be the support of their dying moments. Canaan was *Immanuel's land*, (Isa. 8. 8.) so that in viewing it he had a view of the blessings we enjoy by Christ. It was a type of heaven, (Heb. 11. 16.) which faith is the substance and evidence of. Note, Those may leave this world with a great deal of cheerfulness, that die in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of heaven, and with Canaan in their eye. Having thus seen the salvation of God, we may well say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*.

5. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. 7. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. 8. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days:

so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

Here is,

I. The death of Moses, (v. 5.) *Moses the servant of the Lord died*. God told him he must not go over Jordan, and though at first he prayed earnestly for the reversing of the sentence, yet God's answer to his prayer sufficed him, and now he *spake no more of that matter*, ch. 3. 26. Thus our blessed Saviour prayed that the cup might pass from him, yet since it might not, he acquiesced with, *Father, thy will be done*. Moses had reason to desire to live a while longer in the world. He was old, it is true, but he had not yet attained to the years of the life of his fathers; his father Amram lived to be 137; his grandfather Kohath 133; his great grandfather Levi 137. Exod. 6. 16. 20. And why must Moses, whose life was more serviceable than any of their's, die at one hundred and twenty; especially since he felt not the decays of age, but was as fit for service as ever? Israel could ill spare him at this time; his conduct and his converse with God would be as great a happiness to them in the conquest of Canaan as the courage of Joshua. It bore hard upon Moses himself, when he had gone through all the fatigues of the wilderness, to be prevented from enjoying the pleasures of Canaan; when he had borne the burthen and heat of the day, to resign the honour of finishing the work to another, and that not his son, but his servant, who must enter into his labours; we may suppose that this was not pleasant to flesh and blood. But the man Moses was very meek; God will have it so, and he cheerfully submits. 1. He is here called the *servant of the Lord*, not only as a good man, all the saints are God's servants; but as a useful man, eminently useful, who had served God's counsels in bringing Israel out of Egypt, and leading them through the wilderness. It was more his honour to be the *servant of the Lord* than to be king in Jeshurun. 2. Yet he dies. Neither his piety nor his usefulness would exempt him from the stroke of death. God's servants must die that they may rest from their labours; receive their recompense and make room for others. When God's servants are removed, and must serve him no longer on earth, they go to *serve him better*, to serve him *day and night in his temple*. 3. He dies in the land of Moab, short of Canaan, while as yet he and his people were in an unsettled condition and not entered into their rest. In the heavenly Canaan there will be no more death. 4. He dies according to the word of the Lord. At the mouth of the Lord, so the word is. The Jews say, "with a kiss from the mouth of God." No doubt he died very easily, (it was an *εὐθανασία*—a *delightful death*;) there were no bands in his death; and he had in his death a most pleasing taste of the love of God to him: but that he *died in the mouth of the Lord*, means no more but that he died in compliance with the will of God. Note, The *servants of the Lord*, when they have done all their other work, must die at last, in obedience to their Master, and be freely willing to go home whenever he sends for them, Acts 21. 13.

II. His burial, v. 6. It is a groundless conceit of some of the Jews, that Moses was translated to heaven as Elijah was, for it is expressly said he *died and was buried*; yet, probably, he was raised to meet Elias, to grace the solemnity of Christ's transfiguration. 1. God himself buried him, namely, by the ministry of angels, which made this funeral, though very private, yet very magnificent. Note, God takes care of the dead bodies of his servants; as their death is precious, so is their dust, not a grain of it shall be lost, but the covenant with it shall be remembered. When Moses was dead, God buried

nim; when Christ was dead, God raised him, for the law of Moses was to have an end, but not the gospel of Christ; believers are dead to the law that they might be married to another, even to *him who is raised from the dead*, Rom. 7. 4. It should seem Michael, that is, Christ, (as some think,) had the burying of Moses, for by him the Mosaic ordinances were abolished and taken out of the way, *nailed to his cross*, and buried in his grave, Col. 2. 14. 2. He was buried in a valley *over against Beth-peor*. How easily could the angels that buried him, have conveyed him over Jordan and buried him with the patriarchs in the cave of Machpelah! But we must learn not to be over-solicitous about the place of our burial; if the soul be at rest with God, the matter is not great where the body rests. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts says, "He was buried over against Beth-peor, that whenever Baal-peor boasted of the Israelites being joined to him, the grave of Moses over against his temple might be a check to him." 3. The particular place was not known, lest the children of Israel, who were so very prone to idolatry, should have enshrined and worshipped the dead body of Moses, that great founder and benefactor of their nation. It is true, we read not, among all the instances of their idolatry, that they worshipped relics, the reason of which perhaps was, because they were thus prevented from worshipping Moses, and so could not for shame worship any other. Some of the Jewish writers say, that the body of Moses was concealed, that necromancers, who inquired of the dead, might not disquiet him, as the witch of Endor did Samuel, to *bring him up*; God would not have the name and memory of his servant Moses thus abused. Many think this was the contest between Michael and the Devil about the body of Moses, mentioned Jude 9. The Devil would make the place known that it might be a snare to the people, and Michael would not let him. Those therefore who are for giving divine honour to the relics of departed saints, side with the Devil against Michael our prince.

III. His age, v. 7. His life was prolonged, 1. To old age. He was one hundred and twenty years old, which though far short of the years of the patriarchs, yet much exceeded the years of most of his contemporaries, for the ordinary age of man had been lately reduced to seventy, Ps. 90. 10. The years of the life of Moses were three forties; the first forty he lived a courtier, at ease and in honour in Pharaoh's court; the second forty he lived a poor desolate shepherd in Midian; the third forty he lived a king in Jeshurun, in honour and power, but encumbered with a great deal of care and toil; so changeable is the world we live in, and allayed with such mixture; the world before us is unmix'd, and unchangeable. 2. To a good old age. *His eye was not dim*, (as Isaac's, Gen. 27. 1. and Jacob's, Gen. 48. 10.) *nor was his natural force abated*; there was no decay either of the strength of his body or of the vigour and activity of his mind, but he could still speak and write and walk as well as ever; his understanding as clear, and his memory as strong, as ever. "His visage was not wrinkled," say some of the Jewish writers; "he had lost never a tooth," say others; and many of them expound it of the shining of his face, (Exod. 34. 30.) that that continued to the last. This was the general reward of his services; and it was in particular the effect of his extraordinary meekness, for that is a grace which is, as much as any other, *health to the navel and marrow to the bones*. Of the moral law which was given by Moses, though the condemning power be vacated to true believers, yet the commands are still binding, and will be to the end of the world; the eye of them is not waxen dim, for they shall discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, nor is

their natural force or obligation abated, but still we are *under the law to Christ*.

IV. The solemn mourning that there was for him, v. 8. It is a debt owing to the surviving honour of deceased worthies, to follow them with our tears, as those who loved and valued them, are sensible of our loss of them, and are truly humbled for those sins which have provoked God to deprive us of them; for penitential tears very fitly mix with these. Observe, 1. Who the mourners were, the children of Israel: they all conformed to the ceremony, whatever it was; though some of them perhaps, who were ill-affected to his government, were but mock-mourners. Yet we may suppose there were those among them, who had formerly quarrelled with him and his government, and perhaps had been of those who spake of stoning him, who now were sensible of their loss, and heartily lamented him when he was removed from them, though they knew not how to value him when he was with them. Thus they who had murmured, were made to learn doctrine, Isa. 29. 24. Note, The loss of good men, especially good governors, is to be much lamented and laid to heart: those are stupid, who do not consider it. 2. How long they mourned, thirty days; so long the formality lasted, and we may suppose there were some, in whom the mourning continued much longer. Yet the *ending of the days of weeping and mourning* for Moses is an intimation, that how great soever our losses have been, we must not abandon ourselves to perpetual grief; we must suffer the wound at least to heal up in time. If we hope to go to heaven rejoicing, why should we resolve to go to the grave mourning? The ceremonial law of Moses is dead and buried in the grave of Christ; but the Jews have not yet *ended the days of their mourning* for it.

9. And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. 10. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11. In all the signs and the wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, 12. And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.

We have here a very honourable encomium passed both on Moses and Joshua; each has his praise, and should have. It is ungrateful so to magnify our living friends, as to forget the merits of those that are gone, to whose memories there is a debt of honour due: all the respects must not be paid to the rising sun; and, on the other hand, it is unjust so to cry up the merits of those that are gone, as to despise the benefit we have in those that survive and succeed them. Let God be glorified in both, as here.

1. Joshua is praised as a man admirably qualified for the work to which he was called, v. 9. Moses brought Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died and left them, to signify that *the law made nothing perfect*, Heb. 7. 19. It brings men into a wilderness of conviction, but not into the Canaan of rest and settled peace. It is an honour reserved for Joshua, (our Lord Jesus, of whom Joshua was a type,) to do that for us, which *the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh*, Rom. 8. 3. Through

him we enter into rest; the spiritual rest of conscience and eternal rest in heaven. Three things concurred to clear Joshua's call to this great undertaking. 1. God fitted him for it. *He was full of the spirit of wisdom*; and so he had need, who had such a peevish people to rule, and such a politic people to conquer. Conduct is as requisite in a general, as courage. Herein Joshua was a type of Christ, in whom are hid the treasures of wisdom. 2. Moses, by the divine appointment, had ordained him to it: *He had laid his hands upon him*; so substituting him to be his successor, and praying to God to qualify him for the service to which he called him; and this comes in as a reason why God gave him a more than ordinary *spirit of wisdom*, because his designation to the government was God's own act; those whom God employs, he will in some measure make fit for the employment; and because this was the thing that Moses had asked of God for him, when he *laid his hands on him*. When the bodily presence of Christ withdrew from his church, he prayed the Father to send another Comforter, and obtained what he prayed for. 3. The people cheerfully owned him and submitted to him. Note, An interest in the affections of people is a great advantage, and a great encouragement to those that are called to public trusts of what kind soever. It was also a great mercy to the people, that when Moses was dead, they were not as sheep having no shepherd, but had one ready among them, in whom they did unanimously, and might with the highest satisfaction, acquiesce.

II. Moses is praised, (v. 10-12.) and with good reason.

1. He was indeed a very great man, especially upon two accounts, (1.) His intimacy with the God of nature; *God knew him face to face*, and so he knew God. See Numb. 12. 8. He saw more of the glory of God than any (at least) of the Old Testament saints ever did. He had more free and frequent access to God, and was spoken to, not in dreams and visions and slumberings on the bed, but when he was awake and standing before the cherubims. Other prophets, when God appeared and spoke to them, were struck with terror, (Dan. 7. 8.) but Moses, whenever he received a divine revelation, kept his temper. (2.) His interest and power in the kingdom of nature; the miracles of judgment he wrought in Egypt before Pharaoh, and

the miracles of mercy he wrought in the wilderness before Israel, served to demonstrate that he was a particular favourite of Heaven, and had an extraordinary commission to act as he did on this earth. Never was there any man whom Israel had more reason to love, or whom the enemies of Israel had more reason to fear. Observe, The historian calls the miracles Moses wrought, *signs and wonders*, done with a *mighty hand, and great terror*; which may refer to the terrors of mount Sinai, by which God fully ratified Moses's commission, and demonstrated it beyond exception to be divine, and this *in the sight of all Israel*.

2. He was greater than any other of the prophets of the Old Testament: though they were men of great interest in heaven and great influence upon earth, yet they were none of them to be compared with this great man; none of them either evidenced or executed a commission from heaven so as Moses did. This seems to have been written long after, yet then there had not risen any prophet *like unto Moses*, nor did there arise any such betwixt that and the *scaling up of the vision and prophecy*. By Moses God gave the law, and moulded and formed the Jewish church; by the other prophets he only sent particular reproofs, directions, and predictions. The last of the prophets concludes with a charge *to remember the law of Moses*; Mal. 4. 4. Christ himself often appealed to the writings of Moses, and vouched him for a witness, as one that *saw his day* at a distance and *speak of him*. But as far as the other prophets came short of him, our Lord Jesus went beyond him; his doctrine more excellent, his miracles more illustrious, and his communion with his Father more intimate, for he *had lain in his bosom from eternity*, and by him God does now in these last days speak to us. The history of *Moses* leaves him buried in the plains of Moab, and concludes with the period of his government; but the history of *our Saviour* leaves him *sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, and we are assured that *of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*. The apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, largely proves the pre-eminence of Christ above Moses, as a good reason why we that are christians, should be obedient, faithful, and constant, to that holy religion which we make profession of. God, by his grace, make us all so!