

Spurgeon on Deuteronomy 2

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Deuteronomy 32:11, 12 The Divine Discipline

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“As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”
— Deuteronomy 32:11, 12.

Moses in this chapter is speaking concerning Israel in the wilderness. When the great host came out of Egypt, they were, through the debasing influences of slavery, — which are not easily or quickly shaken off, — not much better than a mere mob. They were not at all fitted to march at once to take possession of Canaan, nor to take part in the compacts of organized social life. Therefore God, instead of taking them by the short way along which they might have passed in a very few days, ordained it so in his providence that they should wander about for forty years in the wilderness — partly, it is true, as a punishment for their unbelief, but also in order that the nation might be trained and educated for its future destiny; made as fit as it could be, to be the custodian of the oracles of truth, and to be the receiver of the revelation which God intended to give to men.

If you will read carefully over the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness, I think you will see that the practical training which God adopted was, if they had been right-minded men, splendidly adapted to bring them to the very highest state of spiritual life. In some respects it was weak through their flesh, but the method itself was superlatively excellent. Here was a people taken away from the multitude of gods which they had been wont to see on every hand in Egypt, and they were taught to reverence an unseen God for whom they had no symbol whatsoever for sometime; and afterwards, when symbolical worship in some form was ordained, yet there was still so little of symbol that Moses could say, “They saw no similitude.” They were trained to worship a spiritual God — in spirit and in truth. They never saw him, but every morning they had the best testimonies of his existence, far round about the camp lay the manna like hoar-frost, or dew, upon the ground. Their feet waxed not weary, neither did their garments become old all those years, and thus about their very clothes on their bodies, and before them on their tables, they had constant proofs of the great God existing and caring for the sons of men. The whole of their training, whilst it educated and developed their patience and their faith, had also the high purpose of teaching them gratitude, and to bind them by the cords of love and the bands of a man to the service of God. It was not because the training was not wise in the highest degree, but because they were children that were corrupters, and, like ourselves, an evil and stiff-necked generation, that they did not learn, even when God himself became their Teacher.

Now in drawing a parallel between the children of Israel and ourselves, we shall invite you to notice, first, in the text: the Divine Instructor, “the Lord alone did lead them;” and then the method of instruction illustrated: they were trained as an eagle trains the eaglet for their flight. First, then, we have —

II. A Divine Instructor.

The Israelites had for their guide, instructor, and tutor, in order to prepare them for Canaan, none other than Jehovah himself. He might employ Moses and Aaron, and he did also make use of those marvelous picture-books, if I may so call them, of sacrifice, and type, and metaphor, but still God himself was their guide and their instructor. And it is so with us. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of the Christian Church. Although he useth this Book, of which we can never speak too highly, although he useth still the ministry of the Word, for which we are thankful as for a candlestick which we trust may never be taken out of its place, still our true teacher is God the Holy Ghost. He instructeth us in the truth, and, meanwhile it is also God who in the rulings and guidings of providence, is our Instructor if we will but learn; teaching us sometimes by sweet mercies, and at other times by bitter afflictions, instructing us from our cradles to our graves, if we will but open our eyes to see and our ears to hear the lessons which he writes and speaks. We, alas! are often as the horse and as the mule which have no understanding; and will not be taught by the providential teachings, but still we have God to be our Teacher, and it is none other than our heavenly Father who is daily training us for the skies. If we be indeed his children, and can say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," we may also go to him as our Teacher, believing he will yet, notwithstanding all our folly, make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

The text speaks of "the Lord alone." Brethren, it is well for us that in providence we are led by "the Lord alone." There is an overruling hand after all, notwithstanding our follies and our willfulness, so that God's purposes are ultimately fulfilled. But I wish this were more true to our consciousness, that we are led by "the Lord alone;" I mean that we waited upon him at every step of life. I am persuaded that the holiest of characters take more matters to God than you and I are accustomed to do: I mean they not only consult him, as we do, upon certain great and critical occasions; but those saints who live nearest to Christ, go to him about little matters, thinking nothing to be too trifling to tell into the ear of Christ.

Some things about which they will not even consult their kindest and wisest human friends will be matters of consultation between them and their Savior. Oh, what mistakes we should escape, what disasters we should avoid, if "the Lord alone" did guide us: and if we watched the signs of his hands in guiding us, if our eyes were to him as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, anxious to know the Lord's will, and saying ever to our own self-love, "Down, down, busy will; down thou proud spirit! What wouldest thou have me to do, my Master, for thy will shall be my will, and my heart shall ever give up its fondest wish, when once I understand what thy will is concerning me." Beloved, I am afraid that some strange god is often with us, even with us who are the people of God. We are united to God, and he will gladly teach us, and from him alone should we learn; but oftentimes we harbor in our heart idolatrous thoughts. All selfishness is idolatry; all repining against the providence of God hath in it the element of rebellion against the Most High. If I love my own will, and if I desire my own way in preference to God's way, I have made a god of my own wisdom, or my own affection, and I have not been true in my loyalty to the only living and true God, even Jehovah. Let us search, and look, and see if there be not some strange god with us. It may be hidden away, perhaps, and we may scarce know it; it may be hidden, too, in that very part of us where our dearest affections dwell. Some Rachel may be sitting in the tent on the camel furniture under which the false gods are concealed. Let us, therefore, make a thorough search, and then invite the Great King himself to aid us.

"Search me, O God, try me, and know my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The great truth which I want to bring forward, if I can, is this: that God in his providence and in grace, as far as we have been made willing to learn of him, is educating us for something higher than this world. This world is the nature in which we dwell. Sometimes we who love the Lord, mount up from it with wings as eagles, but we do not keep on the wing. We drop again: we cleave to earth. 'Tis our mother, and it seems as though we can never rise permanently above our kinship to it. Very powerful is it in its attraction over us. Down we come again. We have not yet learned to keep up yonder, where the atmosphere is clear, and where the smoke of the world's cares will not reach us. But God is educating us for the skies. The meaning of these trials of yours, the interpretation of your sorrows, is this: God is preparing you for another state, making you fit to dwell with angels and archangels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. If this earth were all, then, your teachers at school, or your tutors when you passed through college, might have sufficed; but this world is but the vestibule to the next, and if you know, as well as man can teach you, how to play your part here with a view only to secular advancement, yet are you not educated at all in the highest sense. God himself must teach and train you, that you may be fit to sit among the princes of the blood-royal before his throne, and to have communion with those celestial spirits who —

"With songs and choral symphonies

Day without night circle his throne rejoicing."

God is teaching you. God alone can do it, and he will do it, but take care that you put away all strange gods, and give yourselves up wholly to his guidance, submitting your will and your affections, and all parts of your spirit and nature to his teaching; that so you may be found fully ready when he shall say, "Come up hither to dwell with me for ever." Now, passing from that, we shall notice very

II. The Methods Of The Divine Instruction.

These methods of divine instruction are given to us under the very poetical picture of the eagle training its young ones for flight. God, to accommodate himself to our poor understandings, sometimes compares himself to a father with children; at other times to a mother with her little ones; sometimes even to an animal. In this case, even to a bird of prey, so that we may but learn no depths of condescension are too great for the Great Teacher. He compares himself here, then, to the eagle. I suppose that Moses was well acquainted with the eagle's natural habits. He describes it, first of all, as stirring up its nest, as though the young birds were loth to stir from their pleasant home. Having from the time of their birth been quiet and happy there, they had no anxiety whatever to try the blue unfathomable oceans of the air. They had no wish to leave the rocky refuge where they had been reared. They feared, perhaps, lest they might fall over the precipices and be dashed in pieces. Therefore is it said, "The eagle stirreth up her nest." She makes it uncomfortable for the little ones, so that they may be willing to quit it, and that which would have been obnoxious and burdensome to them, they may come even to desire, namely, to be out of the nest. Someone has quaintly said, that the eagle puts thorns into the nest, which prick the fledgelings, so that they are anxious to get away.

Certain it is that God does thus with those he would train for the skies. He stirs up their nest. Cannot some of you recollect times when your nests were stirred by providential dealings while you were in sin? All things went well with you for a season, but you forgot God, and his son Jesus had no attractions for you. But suddenly the child sickened or the wife was smitten with death, or trade separated from you, or you yourselves were ill, or there was a famine in the land. Then it was, when you were in want, your nest being thoroughly stirred up, that you said, "I will arise and go unto my Father." The land of Goshen was like a nest to the Israelites. They had no desire to come out of it, but God stirred them up by means of Pharaoh, who kept them in heavy bondage, put them to brickmaking, and then to make bricks without straw, and then slew their male children. In all sorts of ways they were made to cry out under the bitter yoke. We know that they loved that nest, for they often longed to be back in it. They talked of the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions, and the cucumbers which they did eat when they were in Egypt, so that the nest seems to have been a tolerably downy one to them at one time. But God so stirred it up, that they longed to be away, and even the howling wilderness seemed a paradise compared with the house of bondage. So was it with you. You found that the world was not what it seemed to be. Troubles increased, providential afflictions trod on each other's heels, and then you turned unto your God, and bethought yourselves of your sins. And so he stirred up your nest, by inward trouble under conviction of sin. I know my soul's nest was very soft once. I thought I had done no great evil, that I had kept God's commandments from my youth up. But when conviction of sin came, then I discovered my heart to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Then my sins, like so many daggers, were at my heart, My soul was rent: I could say with gracious George Herbert, —

"My thoughts are all a case of knives,

Wounding my heart."

There was no rest, no peace, no joy, no comfort to be found. Well, that was God stirring up the nest. If there are any of you in that condition, now, — uneasy and troubled about sin, I am glad of it. Your nest is being stirred, and God grant that you may fly from it and never come back to that nest again!

If all had gone smoothly with you, if sin had always been a sweet morsel to your tongue, we might despair of your ever being saved; but now you feel the smart of it, I trust it is, in order that you may be delivered from the guilt of it, and led to find a Savior. Well, since that, dear friends, how many times we have had our nests stirred up! I do not know your history, but you do, and I ask you now to look it over. Oh, you planned, and planned, and planned, and said, "Now I shall live in this house for the next twenty or thirty years; I shall live here, certainly, as long as I live anywhere," and now you find yourselves, perhaps, fifty or a hundred miles from it. You were in the service of a certain kind man, and you felt very happy in it, but the firm has broken up, and where are you now? There is that dear child you have set your heart upon; you have said, "What a mercy it will be to see him growing up! What a comfort he will be to me!" He is not a comfort to you, but just the very reverse, for he is your greatest sorrow. It is God stirring up your nest. Whereas a few years ago you were in good, sound health, now the eyes begin to fail, or the ears are giving way, or there is some internal complaint, or some constant pain. Whereas years ago you were a master, you are now a servant; whereas years ago everybody looked up to you, now everybody looks down upon you. It is all the stirring up of the nest, because you have no abiding city here; because you were too prone to say, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved," therefore God has stirred up your nest, and he will do it yet again and again. Between now and heaven how many times will the nest of ours be stirred? Oh, blessed be God for it! "Moab is settled upon his lees: he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel"; and then comes a curse upon him. Sometimes these long periods of prosperity, and rest, and ease are very unhealthy for us poor unworthy and sinful beings. If we were more like Jesus, if we were more pure and heavenly, we could bear prosperity; but because we are so sinful, I question if any of us can bear it long. If the Master shall give some of us outward prosperity, he will have to whip us behind the door in private, to

keep us right. We must have some thorn in the flesh, some secret grief: there must be some skeleton in the cupboard, some specter in some chamber of the house, or else we shall say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," and when we do this we shall be modern fools, like the great fool of old. But the gracious Lord will not let his people get into that state. Again and again, and yet again, against their wishes, and contrary to their expectations, he will stir their nest, and they shall cry out against it, but if they did but only know the meaning of it, or could read the whole of it in the light of eternity, they would bless the hand which tears away their comforts, seeing divine wisdom and infinite affection in it all. That, then, is the first thing: God instructs his people to mount aloft by stirring up their nests.

The next picture is the eagle fluttering over her young. What is that for? She wants them to mount, my brethren. Well, then, in order to teach them to mount she first mounts herself, "she fluttereth over her young." She moves her wings to teach them that thus they must move their wings, that thus they must mount. There is no teaching like teaching by example. We always learn a great deal more through our eyes and ears than we do merely through our ears, and those of us who cannot preach with our mouths would do well to preach with our lives, which is the very best kind of preaching. So God preaches to us. If he would have us holy, how holy he is himself! "Be ye holy for I am holy." Would he have us generous? How generous is he! "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." Would he have us forgive our enemies? How he delights in mercy himself! If we want a picture of perfection, where can we get it but in God? "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." God shows us his law in his holy actions, he being himself the very mirror and paragon of everything that is absolutely pure and right. Above all, the Lord has been pleased to set us an example of mounting above the world, in the person and life of his own dear Son. Oh, how the eagle flutters when I look upon the Savior!

"Such was thy truth and such thy zeal,

Such deference to thy Father's will,

Such love and meekness so divine

I would transcribe and make them mine.

**"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of thy prayer:
The desert thy temptations knew,
Thy conflict and thy victory too.**

**"Be thou my pattern: make me bear
More of thy gracious image here,
Then God the Judge shall own my name
Amongst the followers of the Lamb."**

Beloved, see how our Lord Jesus this day mounts to heaven. There is he: he has gone there that our hearts may follow him. He fluttered to the skies that we might also follow, and might rise above the world, setting our affections no longer upon the things of earth, but upon things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. What way could there be of teaching us tenderness like the tenderness of the Savior? What method of teaching us love, like the display of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Would you learn? If you will not learn with Christ for your pattern, in what school shall you be trained? Brethren and sisters, I commend you to the picture of the eagle fluttering and thus setting an example to its little ones. You also may see before your eyes the great incarnate God teaching you how to mount above the trials and temptations of this mortal life, and living even on earth a celestial life.

This, however, is not all the eagle does. We read in our text that she then spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings. I suppose this means just this, that spreading her wings she entices her young ones to get between her wings upon her back, and then she mounts and flies towards the sun. It may be fable or not, I do not know, that she flies towards the sun to teach her eaglets to bear its blaze. Then, when she has mounted to a good height, she suddenly shifts her wings and throws the young eaglets off, and there they are on their wings. They begin to descend to earth, not able to keep themselves up, but compelled to fly, but before they fall on the rock she makes a swoop and comes under them, and catches them on her wings again, gives them a little rest; bears them up once more, and then throws them off again, so that they must fly. But she takes care that these early trials, for which they are scarcely able, shall not end in their destruction, for again she makes another swoop and catches them between her wings once again.

This is the picture of what God does to us again. We must speak of him after the metaphor which he himself uses — he takes us up between those mighty wings, and bears us as high as we dare go, and only pauses because he knows we cannot bear more now. Then, when we have had full fellowship, and looked the sun in the face, and have had bright enjoyment of heaven, as far as

we could bear them, he throws us off suddenly and makes us try our own wings, and alas! they are very feeble and weak indeed. We discover then our own impotence, and we think we shall fall like stars, and be dashed in pieces, but lo! he comes, and underneath us are the everlasting wings, and just when we thought we should surely come to destruction, we find ourselves safely sheltered between the mighty pinions of the Eternal God. Up, again, we mount, and before long we are thrown off again — cast away, as it were, for a time; his face is hidden from us, or else by some outward trial of providence we are made to try our wings again to see whether our faith will keep us up, and by degrees it comes to pass that we learn to fly till we love flying, and are not satisfied to come back to earth anymore, loving to fly, and often sighing and longing for the day when we shall be permitted to —

**Stretch our wings and fly
Straight to yonder worlds of joy.**

Do you not feel sometimes as if your wing-feathers were come, my brethren? Surely you must sometimes feel as though your faith were growing stronger, and your communion with Christ getting clearer; as though you anticipated and felt that the time must be drawing near when you could mount to dwell where Jesus is. I am thankful if such be your experience, but I should not wonder if you find that all the wing-feathers which you have got will be all too few for you, for you may yet be made to have another descent from between the almighty wings, and be made once again to see how great your weakness is. One other thought, however, occurs to us. There is no doubt that the idea of security as well as of teaching is here, because when the eagle bears her young ones on her wings, if the archer, or in these modern days the hunter with his rifle, should seek to destroy the eaglets, it is plain there is no reaching them without first killing the mother-bird. So there is no destroying possible to the true people of God. “Greater is he that is for us, than all that can be against us.” God puts himself between his people and the danger which threatens them, and unless the foe should be mightier than God himself — which is inconceivable — there is no soul that trusts in him which shall know eternal hurt.

Oh, how glorious a thing it is to feel, when the light air is all around me, and I know that if I fall I should perish, that yet I cannot fall, for God’s wings bear me up, and to feel that though there are hosts of enemies able to destroy me if they can get at me, yet they cannot, for they must first get through God himself before they can get to the weak soul who hangs upon Jesus and rests alone in him. Well did David say, “In the time of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock.” You know the threefold figure. The “pavilion” stood in the middle of the camp, and all the armed men kept watch around the royal tent. There was no slaying the man who was hidden in the royal pavilion unless the king himself were destroyed. And unless divine sovereignty be overthrown not one of the elect can perish. Then, again, there was “the secret of the tabernacle.” That was the most holy place, into which no one entered but the high priest once a year, and there God said he would put his child, so that they must first break through and dare the very Shekinah, and come before the brightness, the destroying brightness, of Jehovah’s face, before they can reach the soul that trusts in the mercy-seat on which the blood was sprinkled. Then, there is the third figure — “he shall set me up upon a rock” — so that the rock itself must shake; the immutability of God itself must cease to be, and God’s everlastingness must die before it shall be possible for a soul to perish that rests in him. The eagle taketh up the eaglets on her wings, and beareth them, so in this way does God lead, and train, and guide us for the skies.

Dear brethren and sisters, I shall not detain you longer, except to say that if God is training you for the skies — oh, let your hearts go up. Grovel not below.

“Go up, go up, my heart,

Dwell with thy God above;

For here thou canst not rest,

Nor here give out thy love,

“Go up, go up, my heart,

Be not a trifler here:

Ascend above these clouds,

Dwell in a higher sphere.

“Let not thy love flow out

To things so soil’d and dim;

Go up to heaven and God,

Take up thy love to him.

“Waste not thy precious stores

On creature-love below;

**To God that wealth belongs,
On him that wealth bestow."**

Thou art a stranger here. If thou be God's child, then, thou art a citizen of another country. Are there any bands to bind thee here? I thought he had broken them. Hast thou never said —

"The bands that bind my soul to earth

Are broken by his hand:

Before his cross I find myself

A stranger in the land."

Are there loved ones to bind thee here?

"Thy best-beloved keeps his throne

On hills of light in worlds unknown."

All the love thou dost dare to give, if thou be true to Christ, to all below, can be as nothing compared with the love which thou givest to him. Dost thou not feel thy soul now drawn towards him? At least, if thou canst not fly on the wings of confidence, fly on the wings of desire. A sigh will mount to him, or he will come down to it. Only be not fond of this world. Do not let this thick clay cleave to thee. Thou art not earth-born now; thou art born from above. This corruptible world must not claim thee, for thou art born again of incorruptible seed. Thou art not this world's property; thou art bought with a price by him who prays for thee that thou mayest be with him where he is and behold his glory. I am ashamed of myself that I who talk thus with you should so often grovel here; but this one thing I must say — I am never happy except when my soul is up with my Lord. I know enough of this to own that it is my misery to feed upon the ashes of this world, to lie among the pots, to serve the brick-kilns of this Egypt. There can be no peace between my soul and this world. Oh, I know this, for this painted Jezebel has mocked me too often, and she has become so ugly in my esteem that I cannot endure her. But yet — what shall we say of our nature! — we go back again to the Marah, which was bitter for us to drink, and try to drink from it again, and the broken cisterns which held no water aforesaid we fly to, again and again. Oh, for more wisdom! The Master has taught us, but he has been so long a time with us, and we have not known him. Yet may he have patience with us, until he has taught us to mount above the world and dwell where he is!

Ah, dear friends, there are some of you to whom I cannot talk in this fashion because you cannot mount. You have nowhere to mount to. Oh, may the Master stir up your nests! I pray that he may put the thorns of conscience into your pillows tonight. May you recollect those sins which God hateth and which God will punish, and if you do remember them and feel bowed down under their weight, then remember that there is one who can help you and who will help you, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Look to him in the hour of trouble, and he will be your deliverer. May the Lord bless these thoughts to all our souls for Jesu's sake.

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Sermon Notes: Deuteronomy 32:36: Man's Extremity, God's Opportunity

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. — Deuteronomy 32:36

To ungodly men the time of their fall is fatal; there is no rising again for them. They mount higher and higher upon the ladder of riches; but at last they can climb no higher, their feet slide, and all is over. This calamity hasteneth on. "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" (verse 35).

But it is not so with three characters of whom we will now speak: they are judged in this world that they may not be condemned hereafter (1 Cor. 11:32). Of each of them it may be said, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down" (Ps. 37:24).

I. THE LORD'S OWN CHURCH.

1. A church may be sorely tried, "power gone, none left."

By persecution the faithful may be cut off (Ps. 107:39).

By removals, death, poverty, a church may be depleted to a painful extent (Isa. 1:8-9).

Through the lack of a faithful ministry, there may be no increase; and those who remain may grow feeble and

dispirited.

By general falling off of hearers, members, etc., a church may be sorely distressed. Various circumstances may scatter a people, such as internal dissension, pestilent heresy, and lack of spiritual life. Where there is no spiritual food hungry souls find no home (Job 15:23).

2. But it may then cry to God.

If indeed his people, the covenant stands, and he will judge them.

If still his servants, the bond holds on his side, and he will repent himself for them.

His eye is ever upon them, and their eye should be up to him.

3. He will return and revive his own church. He who killed will make alive (verse 39). He pities his children when he sees them broken down under their sorrows.

4. Meanwhile the trial is permitted:

To find out his servants and drive out hypocrites (Isa. 33:14).

To test the faith of sincere saints, and to strengthen it.

To manifest his own grace by supporting them under the trying times, and by visiting them with future blessing.

To secure to himself the glory when the happier days are granted.

II. THE TRIED BELIEVER.

1. His power may be gone. Personally he becomes helpless. Bodily health fails, prudence is baffled, skill is taken away, courage sinks, even spiritual force departs (Lam. 3:17-18).

2. His earthly help may fail. "There is none shut up or left" A man without a friend moves the compassion of God.

3. He may be assailed by doubts and fears, and hardly know what to do with himself (Job 3:23-26). In all this there may be chastisement for sin. It is so described in the context.

4. His hope lies in the compassion of God: he has no pleasure in putting his people to grief. "He will turn again, he will have compassion" (Mic. 7:19). Such sharp trials may be sent because:

Nothing less would cure the evil hidden within (Isa. 27:9).

Nothing less might suffice to bring the whole heart to God alone.

Nothing less might affect the believer's future life (Isa. 38:16).

Nothing less might complete his experience, enlarge his acquaintance with the Word, and perfect his testimony for God.

III. THE CONVINCED SINNER.

He is cleaned out of all that wherein he prided himself.

1. His self-righteousness is gone. He has no boasting of the past, or self-trust for the future (Job 9:30-31).

2. His ability to perform acceptable works is gone. "Their power is gone." "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

3. His secret hopes which were shut up are now all dead and buried.

4. His proud romantic dreams are gone (Isa. 29:8).

5. His worldly delights, his bold defiance, his unbelief, his big talk, his carelessness, his vain confidence, are all gone.

6. Nothing is left but the pity of God (Ps. 103:13).

When the tide has ebbed out to the very uttermost, it turns.

The Prodigal had spent all before he returned.

Empty-handed sinners are welcome to the fullness of Christ.

Since the Lord repents of the sorrows of the desponding, they may well take heed and repent of their sins.

Notes in Aid

The Church in New Park Street was sadly reduced in numbers, and from the position of its meeting-house there seemed no prospect before it, but ultimate dissolution; but there were a few in its midst who never ceased to pray for a gracious revival. The congregation became smaller and smaller, but they hoped on, hoped ever. Let it never be forgotten that when they were at their worst the Lord remembered them, and gave to them such a tide of prosperity that they have had no mourning, or doubting, but more than thirty years of continued rejoicing:

Man's extremity is God's opportunity.
Extremities are a warrant for importunities.
A man at his wit's end is not at his faith's end.
Matthew Henry

Grandly did the old Scottish believer, of whom Dr. Brown tells us in his *Horse Subsecivee*, respond to the challenge of her pastor, regarding the ground of her faith. "Janet" said the minister, "what would you say if after all he has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?" "E'en's [even as] he likes," answered Janet. "If he does, he'll lose mair than I'll do," meaning that he would lose his honor for truth and goodness. Therefore, the Lord cannot leave his people in the hour of their need.

"Every praying Christian will find that there is no Gethsemane without its angel"

He brings his people into a wilderness, but it is that he may speak comfortably to them; he casts them into a fiery furnace, but it is that they may have more of his company. — T. Brooks

A person who could not swim had fallen into the water. A man who could swim sprang in to save him. Instead, however, of at once taking hold of the struggling man, he kept at some distance from him until he had ceased struggling; he then laid hold of him, and pulled him ashore. Upon the people on the pier asking him why he did not at once take hold of the drowning person, he replied, "I could not attempt to save a man so long as he could try to save himself" The Lord acts thus towards sinners: they must cease from themselves, and then he will display the power of his grace upon them.

So long as a sinner has a mouldy crust of his own he will not feed upon heavenly manna. They say that half a loaf is better than no bread; but this is not true, for on half a loaf men lead a starvation existence, but when they have no bread they fly to Jesus for the food which came down from heaven. As long as a soul has a farthing to bless itself with, it will foolishly refuse the free forgiveness of its debts, but absolute penury drives it to the true riches:

'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own
We get no full discharge.

Exposition of Deuteronomy by C H Spurgeon

Deuteronomy 1

Deuteronomy 1:6 The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.

IT is a good thing sometimes to look back, — to take a retrospective view of our life. It is a very bad thing to live upon the past, — to say, "I believe I am a child of God because I had certain spiritual enjoyments and experiences ten or twelve years ago." Ah! such stale fare as this will not feed hungry souls. They need present enjoyment, or, at least, present confidence in the ever-living God. Yet, brethren, we may sometimes gather fuel for today from the ashes of yesterday's fire. Remembering the mercies of God in the past, we may rest assured concerning the present and the future.

If we have wisely learnt by experience, we may, from our own failures in the past, gain wisdom which shall enable us to avoid the evils which overcame us on former occasions. It is well to do as you may sometimes have seen the barge do on a river or canal. They walk backward, pushing with all their might backward, to drive their barge, forward; and, sometimes, we may go backward just far enough to help us to push forward, but no further than that. Never must any one of us say to himself, "What I was in my youth, or what I was in middle life, is a sufficient comfort for me now. Soul, take thine ease, for I have much goods laid up for many years." That will never do, for we need to exercise a present faith, to enjoy a present love, and to live in present holiness and fear of the

Lord. Yet it will help us if we remember all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us these many years in the wilderness.

We Must Expect Changes. Israel was not always to dwell at Horeb, and even the choicest place of divine manifestation is not always to be ours. The land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar, though very precious to us because of the spiritual experiences we have enjoyed there, are not to be our permanent places of abode. We have to journey onward, and pitch our tent somewhere else. (From Deuteronomy 1:6 Advance)

Deuteronomy 1:25. 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.

YOU REMEMBER the occasion concerning which these words were written. The children of Israel sent twelve men as spies into the land of Canaan, who brought back with them the fruit of the land, amongst the rest a bunch of grapes from Eshcol too heavy to be borne by one man, and which, therefore, two of them carried on a staff between them. But I shall not remark upon the figure, but only say that as they learned of Canaan by the fruit of the land brought to them by the spies, so you and I, even while we are on earth, if we be the Lord's beloved, may learn something of what heaven is—a state to which we are to attain hereafter—by certain blessings which are brought to us even while we are here on earth.

The Israelites were sure that Canaan was a fertile land when they saw the fruits which it produced, brought by their brethren, and when they ate thereof. Perhaps there was but little for so many, and yet those who did eat were made at once to, understand that it must have been a goodly soil that produced such fruit. Now, then, beloved, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ have had clusters of the grapes of Eshcol. We have had some fruits of heaven even since we have been on earth, and by them we are able to judge of the richness of the soil of Paradise which bringeth forth such rare and choice delights. (from [Deuteronomy 1:25 Foretastes of the Heavenly Life](#))

Deuteronomy 2

Deuteronomy 2:7 “For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: I knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.”

The habit of numbering our days is a very admirable one. To do it rightly a man needs to be taught of God; and if we have not been so taught, it is well to offer the prayer, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Some men number their cattle, number their acres, number their pounds, but do not number their days, or, if they do, they fail to draw the inference from them which both reason and grace suggest — that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. It is not wisdom to try to seem younger than you are, though I have known many attempt it. I have marked between census and census that the ages of certain persons have hardly increased ten years, as I thought they would have done by the lapse of time. The age of many whom we admire is a mystery inscrutable. What there can be to be ashamed of in advancing years I am at a loss to know, for old age commands reverence, and not ridicule. Wherefore sorrow because another year of trial is over, another year of labor ended, another milestone on the road to heaven left behind?

Instead of regretting that we are so far on the voyage to the fair haven, we may rather rejoice and make our years at least as many as we can. If we pretend to be more juvenile than we are, uncharitable persons may possibly attribute it to vanity; it is a pity to give them such an opportunity.

At the same time, ripe years are not to be trifled with. We have known some who have treated the fact that they are advancing in life with unbecoming levity; their grey hairs show that they are nearing the bounds of life, but they are as thoughtless as if they were yet in their minority, and so they are an incongruous miniature of the weakness of age, and the frivolity of youth.

It is well to keep a cheerful heart to the last hour, and no man has so much reason for doing so as a believer in Jesus; but at the same time it is surely time to be solemnly earnest when one has passed the prime of life. Wisdom dictates that then, if never before, there should be a grave consideration of eternal earth should be more under foot, and heaven should be more in the heart. Every year should increase our sense of the certainty, value, and nearness of eternal things. “’Tis time to live if I grow old.” Works for God among our fellow-men will soon be impossible to us; let us be diligent in them while as yet our sun is above the horizon. Now, if ever, we should redeem the time, because the days are evil.

In the very middle of life, when strength is in our bones, and we have the grandest possibilities of vigorous service, it is well for us to be fully alive to the highest interests and purposes, and not to be spending a dreamy existence, as if we were mere lotus eaters, born into a garden of poppies to sleep the lifelong day. We have something better to do than to flit among the flowers like butterflies, with nothing particular to care about, and no eternal future within the range of our thoughts or hopes.

Deuteronomy 6

Deuteronomy 6:1. Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

God's commandments are to be taught, but they are also to be practiced: "which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them." And it is this doing of them that is the hard part of the work. It is not easy always to teach them; a man needs the Spirit of God if he is to teach them aright, but practice is harder than preaching. May God grant us grace, whenever we hear his Word, to do it!

Deuteronomy 6:2. 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.

Obedience to God should arise from the fear of him, or from a holy awe of God felt in the heart, for all true religion must be heart work. It is not the bare action alone at which God looks, but at the motive — at the spirit which dictates it, Hence it is always put, "That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments." Neither are we to be content with keeping commands ourselves. It is the duty of parents to seek the good of their children — to seek that the son and the son's son should walk in the ways of God all their lives. May God grant us never to be partakers of the spirit of those who think that they have no need to look after the religion of their children — who seem as if they left it to a blind fate. Stay we care for them with this care that our son and our son's son should walk before the Lord all the days of their life.

The fear of God must always be a practical power in our lives: "that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments." And that practical fear should lead us into obedience in detail; we ought so to study God's Word that we endeavor "to keep all his statutes and his commandments." A slipshod obedience is disobedience. We must be careful and watchful to know the divine will, and in all respects to carry it out. You who are his children, dwelling in such a household, and with such a Father, it well becomes you to be obedient children. Nay, it is not only for us to obey the command of the Lord our God, but we should pray till the rest of the verse also comes true: "thou, and thy son, and thy sows son," our children and our children's children. I am sure that, if we love God, we shall long that our children and our children's children may love him, too. If your trade has supported you, and brought you in a competence, you will naturally wish to bring your son up to it. But, on a far higher platform, if God has been a good God to you, your deepest desire will be that your son and your son's son should serve the same Divine Master through all the days of their life.

"That thy days may be prolonged." God does not give long life to all his people; yet in obedience to God is the most probable way of securing long life. There are also many of God's saints who are spared in times of pestilence, or who are delivered by an act of faith out of great dangers. That ancient declaration of God often comes true in these later times, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." At any rate, you who love the Lord shall live out your days, whereas the wicked shall not live out half their days. You shall complete the circle of life, whether it be a great circle or a little one; with long life will God satisfy you, and show you his salvation.

The passage which now follows is held in very great esteem by the Jewish people even down to this day. They repeat it frequently, for it forms part of their morning and evening services.

Deuteronomy 6:3, 4. 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. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

It seems, according to the old covenant, that temporal prosperity was appended as a blessing to the keeping of God's commandments. It has been sometimes said that while prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant, adversity is the blessing of the new, and there is some truth in that statement, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and yet is it true that the best thing for a meal is that he should walk in the commands of God. There is a sense in which we do make the best of both worlds when we seek the love of God. When we seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, other things are added be us; so that it is not without meaning to us that the Lord here promises temporal blessings to his people.

This is the great doctrine that we learn, both from the Old and the New Testament there is one Lord. And this great truth has been burnt into the Jews by their long chastisement, and, whatever other mistakes they make, you never find them making a mistake about this. The Lord thy God is one Lord. May we be kept always from all idolatry — from all worship of anything else, except the living God. The sacred unity of the Divine Trinity may we hold fast evermore.

There is but one God. This is the very basis of our faith; we know nothing of "gods many and lords many." Yet it is the Triune God whom we worship; we are not less Unitarians in the highest meaning of that word because we are Trinitarians. We are not less believers in the one living and true God because we worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Deuteronomy 6:5. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Does not this show what is the very nature of God? God is love, for he commands us to love him. There was never an earthly prince or king whom I have heard of in whose statute-book it was written, "Thou shalt love the king." No; it is only in the statute-book of him who is the Lord of life and love that we read such a command as this. To my mind it seems a very blessed privilege for us to be permitted to love One so great as God is. Here it is we find our heaven. It is a command, but we regard it rather as a loving, tender invitation to the highest bliss: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," — that is, intensely; "and with all thy soul," — that is, most sincerely, most lovingly, "and with all thy might" with all thy energy, with every faculty, with every possibility of thy nature.

It is not a little love that God deserves, nor is it a little love that he will accept. He blesses us with all his heart and all his might, and after that fashion are we to love him.

Deuteronomy 6:6. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

Oh, how blessed to have them written on the heart by the Holy Spirit! We can never get them there except he who made the heart anew shall engrave upon these fleshy tablets the divine precepts.

Deuteronomy 6:7. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,

Christian parent, have you done this? "Thou shalt" not only teach them, but "teach them diligently unto thy children."

Deuteronomy 6:7. 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.

The Word of God is not for some particular place called a church or a meeting-house. It is for all places, all times, and all occupations. I wish that we had more of this talking over of God's Word when we sit by the way, or when we walk.

Our common talk should be much more spiritual than it often is. There is no fear of degrading sacred subjects by the frequent use of them; the fear lies much the other way, lest by a disuse of them we come to forget them. This blessed Book, the Holy Word of God, is a fit companion for your leisure as well as for your labor, for the time of your sleeping and the time of your waking. It will bless you in your private meditations, and equally cheer the social hearth, and comfort you when in mutual friendship you speak the one with the other. Those who truly love God greatly love his holy Word.

Deuteronomy 6:8. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand,

They shall be thy practical guide, at thy fingers' ends, as it were.

With thee in all thine actions — with thee in all thy thoughts — conspicuously with thee — not out of ostentation, but through thine obedience to become apparent unto all men.

Deuteronomy 6:8. And they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

Thou shalt see by them, thou shalt see with them, thou shalt see through them.

Deuteronomy 6:9. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

I could almost wish that this were literally fulfilled much more often than it is. I was charmed, in many a Swiss village, to see a text of Scripture carved on the door-post. A text hung up in your houses may often speak when you are silent. We cannot do anything that shall be superfluous in the way of making known the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 6:10-12. 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, 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; then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Bread eaten is soon forgotten. How often we act like clogs that will take the bones from our hand, and then forget the hand that gave them! It should not be so with us. All our spiritual, mercies, and many of our temporal ones, are very much like the inheritance of Israel in the land of Canaan, wells that they did not dig, and vineyards which they did not plant. Our blessings come from sources that are beyond our own industry and skill; they are the fruits of the holy inventiveness of God, and the splendor and fullness of his thoughtfulness towards his poor children. Let us not forget him, since evidently he never forgets us.

Pride in the peculiar sin of prosperity, and pride stands side by side with forgetfulness of God. Instead of remembering whence our mercies came, we begin to thank ourselves for these blessings, and God is forgotten. I remember one of whom it was said that he

was a self-made man, and he adored his Creator, and I may say that there are a great many persons who do just that. They believe that they have made themselves, and so they worship themselves. Be it ours to remember that it is God who giveth us strength to get wealth or to get position, and, therefore, unto him be all the honor of it, and never let him be forgotten.

Deuteronomy 6:13-15. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (.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.

Our God is a jealous God. One said to a Puritan, "Why be so precise?" and he replied, "Because I serve a precise God." God has done so much for us, in order to win our hearts, that he ought to have them altogether for himself. When he has them all, it is all too little; but to divide our heart is to grieve his Spirit, and sorely to vex him.

He will have the heart all to himself. Two Gods he cannot endure. Of false gods, there may be many: of the true God there can be but one, and he is a jealous God.

Verses 15-19 - Now, this covenant of works they break, as we also have long ago broken ours. Blessed be God, our salvation now hangs on another covenant which cannot fail nor break down — the covenant of grace. Yet, still, now that we become the Lord's children, we are put under the discipline of the Lord's house, and these words might not unfitly set forth what is the discipline of the Lord's house towards his own children, namely, that he does bless us when we walk in his ways, and that he will walk contrary to us if we walk contrary to him. He keeps a rod in his house, and in very love he uses that upon his best beloved ones. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities." He will not kill his children, nor treat them as a judge treats a criminal, for they are not under the law, but under grace; but he will chasten them and treat them as a father chasteneth his child — out of love. Oh! that we might have grace to walk before him with a holy, childlike fear, that so we may walk always in the light of his countenance.

Deuteronomy 6:16-24. Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. 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, to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Land hath spoken. 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? 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: and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he aware unto our fathers. 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.

Oh, friends, it will be well when our boys and girls ask us questions like this, and when we can give such answers! The great lack of the age in which we live is obedience to God. "Modern thought" has flung off obedience to Divine Revelation; and even in matters relating to social morality, many men reject all idea of anything being commanded of God; they only judge by what appears to them to be either pleasurable or profitable. What is most needed just now is that we ourselves, and those about us, become really conscious of the greatness and sovereignty of God, and yield ourselves to him to do as he bids us, when he bids us, where he bids us, and in all things to seek to follow his commandments that he may "preserve us alive, as it is at this day."

And cannot we tell our children what God has done for us — how he brought us out of our spiritual captivity, and how in his almighty love, he has brought us into his Church and will surely bring us into the glory above? May God grant us grace to speak about these things without diffidence, With great confidence to tell our children of what he has done.

Deuteronomy 6:25. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

That would have been Israel's righteousness if the people had observed to do all these commandments before the Lord; but it was marred and spoilt by disobedience. We rejoice to know that we who believe in Jesus have a righteousness unto which Israel did not attain, for the Lord Jesus Christ himself is our righteousness.

Deuteronomy 8

Deuteronomy 8:1. All 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 swear unto your fathers.

Observe, dear friends, that the Lord demands of his people universal obedience to his commands: "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do." Christians, although they are not under the law, are under the sweet constraints of

love; and that love incites them to complete obedience, so that they desire to leave undone nothing which the Lord commands.

And this obedience is to be careful as well as complete: "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do;" not only do them, but do them with care. When the commandment applies to a certain duty, obey it in full, both in the letter and in the spirit, for there are numerous and weighty blessings attached to obedience, — not of merit, but of grace. If we walk carefully in the fear of God, we shall find that in keeping his commandments there is great reward.

Every word here seems emphatic. Like the children of Israel, we are to observe all the commandments of the Lord our God; not merely some of them, picking and choosing as we please. It is a very ill conscience, which regards some of God's statutes, and pays no attention to the others; in fact, the very act of making a selection as to what commands we will observe is gross disobedience.

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do." Notice that we are not only to do as we are bidden, but to do it with carefulness: "ye shall observe to do." God would not have a thoughtless, careless, blind service; but we must bow our mind and heart as well as our will to his service. Remember also that it is not sufficient to "observe" the commandments so as to note what they are, but we are to "observe to do" them. That observation which does not end in right practice is like a promising blossom upon a tree, which never knits, and which therefore produces no fruit.

Further notice that, to walk in the ways of God, is for our own benefit as well as for his glory: "That ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers." There are, doubtless, many good things, which we miss because we are not careful in our walking. I am sure that the happiest life will be found to be that which is most carefully conducted upon the principles of holy obedience to God's commands. There are certain blessings which God will not give to us while we are disobedient to him. Many a father feels that he cannot indulge his child as he would wish to indulge him when he finds the child negligent as to his father's will. So, if we please God, God will please us; but, if we walk contrary to him, he will walk contrary to us. Let me read this most instructive verse again, that it may be further impressed upon your memories and your hearts: "All 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 sware unto your fathers."

To help you in obeying these commands, it is added,-

Deuteronomy 8:2. 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.

Look back, and derive from your past experience a motive for more careful obedience in the future. He does not read his own life aright who does not see in it abundant causes for gratitude; and how can gratitude express itself better than by a cheerful, hearty obedience in the present and the future?

It is well to have a good memory, and that is the best memory which remembers what is best worth remembering. There are many things which we would gladly forget, yet we find it hard to forget them; they often rise up at most inappropriate times, and we loathe ourselves to think that we should ever recollect them at all. But, whatever we forget, we ought always to remember what God has done for us. This should excite our gratitude, create deep humility, and foster our faith both for the present and the future: "Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" If forty years of the Lord's leading should make some of us bless his holy name, what ought you to do, my brethren, who, perhaps, are getting near the four-score years? What praise and gratitude should be rendered by you to him who has led you all your life long!

See what God intends to accomplish by our wilderness experience. It is, first, to "humble" us. Has it had that effect? Then it is to "prove:" us. Ah, I am afraid it has had that result, and has proved what poor wretched creatures we are! That has been proved in our experience again and again. It is, also that it may be known what is in our heart, whether we will keep God's commandments, or not,

Deuteronomy 8:3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not,
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What a wonderful sequence there is in these short sentences! "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger;" and one would think that the next sentence would be, "and allowed thee to starve." No; it is, "and fed thee with manna." They had the better appetite for the manna, and were the more ready to see the hand of God in sending the manna, because of that humbling and hunger which God had previously suffered them to endure. "Fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not." The very name by which they called it was, "Manna," or, "What is this?" "for they wist not what it was." "And fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not."

Deuteronomy 8:3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna,

These two sentences come very closely together: "Suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna." I suppose we are not fit to eat heavenly bread till first of all we begin to hunger for it. God loves to give to men who will eat with an appetite: "He suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna."

Deuteronomy 8:3. Which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know;

It was a new kind of food; and even in the day when they ate it, they did not fully know what it was. They saw that it came by a miracle, and it remained a mystery; and I think we can say that, though we have fed upon the Bread of heaven, some of us, for well-nigh forty years, yet we hardly know, nor dare to think that we know, what it is made of, nor can we tell all the sweetness that is in it. We know the love of Christ, but it still passes our knowledge. It is true of us, as of Israel in the wilderness, "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know."

Deuteronomy 8:3. 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.

It is a grand thing to be delivered from materialism, to be freed from the notion that the outward means are absolutely essential for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. If God had so willed it, we could have lived on air, if the air had been sanctified by the Word of God and prayer for such a use. The Lord has, however, chosen to feed us upon bread; yet our highest life, our real life, does not live on bread, but it lives on the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. This is one of the passages with which our Lord fought Satan in the desert, and overcame him. Happy is that servant of God who will arm himself with this same truth, and feel, "I am not to be provided for merely by money, or by anything else that is visible. God will provide for me somehow, and I can leave all care about the means if the means fail, and get away to the God of the means, and lean, not on what I see, but on that arm which is invisible. That which you can see may fail you, for it is, like yourself, a shadow; but he whom you cannot see will never fail you. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack, but the arm eternal never faileth, and never is shortened. Lean on that arm, and you shall never be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end. It takes forty years to teach some people that lesson, and some, alas! have not learned it even at the end of eighty years.

Deuteronomy 8:3. 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.

God can make us live on bread, if it be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer; he does make our souls to live upon his Word. He could, if so it pleased him, make our bodies live by that Word without any outward sustenance whatever.

Deuteronomy 8:4. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

What a wonderful experience the Israelites had in the wilderness! They were always fed, though in a waste howling wilderness, dry and barren. They always had water following the from that stream which flowed out of the flinty rock, from Which you might sooner have expected to strike fire than to obtain water. And as for their garments, they did not wear out. They had no shops to go to, and they were unable to make new clothes in the wilderness, on account of their frequent moving to and fro; yet were they always clad; and, though they were a host of weary pilgrims, marching backwards and forwards for forty years, yet their feet did not swell. Oh, what a mercy that was! "He keepeth the feet of his saints." Has it not been so with you also, dear friends? You have said, "What shall I do if I live so long, and if I have to bear so many troubles, and make so many marches through the very valley of the shadow of death?" What will you do? Why, you will do as you have done! Trust in God, and go on. You shall be fed, and you shall be upheld even unto the end.

See how God not only cares for his people's food, but for their raiment also. We may, therefore, well take heed to Paul's injunction: "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." Whether it was by a miracle that the Israelites' raiment did not 'wear out, or whether it came to pass, in the order of providence, that they were able to get fresh clothing when it did wear out, does not signify at all; it made no difference to them how it was arranged, for it was equal kindness on the part of God who provided for them.

"Neither did thy foot swell." We call the Arab, sometimes, "The pilgrim of the weary foot"; but the Israelites' feet were not weary. They traversed a stony, wilderness, yet God kept them in such health and strength that their feet swelled not even after forty years of journeying. You and I often get worn out in forty hours; forty days are as long as we can hope to go; but God enabled his ancient people to go on for forty years, and still their feet swelled not. Dr. Watts sweetly sang,-

"Mere mortal power shall fade and die,

And youthful vigor cease;

But we that wait upon the Lord

Shall feel our strength increase.

“The saints shall mount on eagles’ wings,
And taste the promised bliss,
Till their unwearied feet arrive
Where perfect pleasure is.”

Deuteronomy 8:5. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, —

Note that we are not only to remember God’s dealings with us, but we are to consider them, to ponder them, to weigh them. “Consider in thine heart,” —

Deuteronomy 8:5. That, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

Do I speak to anyone who is just now under the rod? “Consider in thine heart” then, that God is dealing with you as a father deals with his sons, “for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” How would you like to be dealt with? Would you rather be without the rod? Then remember that “if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Do you wish to be treated so? I am sure you do not; you wish to have the children’s portion; so you say, “Deal with me, Lord, as thou art wont to do with those that fear thy name. We are willing to have the rod of the covenant for the sake of the covenant to which it belongs.

We sometimes think that we could do without the Lord’s chastening. If he will give us food and raiment, and keep our foot from swelling, we will not crave the rod. No; but though we do not ask for it, the rod is one of the choicest blessings of the covenant; and if we are the Lord’s children, we shall not go without it. To come under divine discipline, is one of the greatest mercies we can ever have. Many of us, who are now men and women, thank God for earthly parents who have corrected us; we wonder what we should have been if there had been no discipline in our father’s house. So, truly, is it with all of us who are God’s children; in years to come, we shall prize the chastisement which now makes us grieve. Even now, it is well if, by faith, we can apply to our own heart this text: “as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”

Deuteronomy 8:6, 7. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. 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;

There are changes in our condition. Israel was not always in the wilderness; the chosen people were brought into a good land, into a place of rest from their weary wanderings. So it may happen to you and to me that, even in temporal circumstances, God may work a great change for us, and especially will he do this in spiritual matters. After a time of wilderness travelling, we who have believed do enter into rest; we come to understand the gospel, and he who understands the gospel is not any longer in the wilderness. In a certain sense, he has come into the land of promise, where he already enjoys covenant mercies. It is true that the Canaanite is still even in that land, and we have to drive him out; but it is a good land to which God has brought us, “a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.” The Lord makes us drink of the river of his good pleasure, he satisfies us with the cooling streams of his covenant love.

Deuteronomy 8:6–8. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. 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; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

This also is the experience of the child of God; in one sense, in heaven; but in another, and perhaps a truer sense, even here below. “We which have believed do enter into rest.” By faith, we take possession of the promised land; and when a Christian gets out of the wilderness experience of doubting and fearing, and comes into the Canaan experience of a simple faith and a fully-assured trust, then he comes “into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;” for God gives to his people not only all they need, but something more. He gives them, not only necessities, but also luxuries, delights, and joys.

Deuteronomy 8:8. A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

I will not go into a spiritualizing of all this; but I know that you, who have come to believe in Christ, and have entered by faith into his rest, know what sweet things God has provided for you; not merely bare necessities, but choice delights. He gives you to eat of the sweetnesses, he gives you the fatnesses, -the wines on the lees, well-refined, and the fat things full of marrow. I trust that there are many here who know the blessed experience of joy and peace in believing. You have entered into a fair region, you have passed through the belt of storms, you have come where the trade winds blow heavenward, your sails are filled, your vessel skips along before the breeze, you are making good way towards the Fair Havens of eternal felicity.

Deuteronomy 8:9. A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it;

When you live in communion with God, and he brings you into the full enjoyment of the covenant blessings, then there is no scarceness with you, there is no lack of anything.

Deuteronomy 8:9. A land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

Or, copper. Silver and gold they had none; but then the princes of Sheba and Seba were to offer them gifts, and bring them their gold and their silver. But if they had nothing for show, they had plenty for use, for iron is a great deal more useful metal than gold; and the copper, which they hardened into brass, was of much more service to them than silver would have been. God will furnish you, dear brother, with all the weapons you need for the Holy War; there may be no gold and silver ornaments for your pride, but there shall be iron instruments to help you in your conflict with your adversaries.

There are deep things hidden away in the gospel treasures. Silver and gold there may be none; but then, iron and copper are much more useful things, and the most useful things we shall ever want in this life lie hidden beneath the surface of the gospel. If we know how to dig deep, we shall be abundantly rewarded by the treasures, which we shall discover.

Well now, if your experience has thus changed, if you have left the fiery serpents and the howling wilderness behind you, and have come into a place of peace and enjoyment, what follows?

Deuteronomy 8:10. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

God permits his people to eat, and to be full; but, when they are so, they must take care that they do not become proud, and that they do not begin to ascribe their profiting to themselves.

He permits you to eat, -not to satiety, but you may eat and be full; only not so full but that you can always bless his name. Do not be afraid of holy joy. Eat and be full of it, only let it never take off your heart from him who gives you the joy. On the contrary, bless thy God for the good land, which he has given thee. It is said that, in the olden time, pious Jews always blessed God before they ate, and always blessed God after they ate. They blessed God for the fragrance of the flower when ever they smelt it. Whenever they drank a cup of water, they blessed the Lord who gave them drink out of the rock in the desert. Oh, that we were always full of praises of God! Then it would not hurt us to be full of meat; but if we get full of meat, and are empty of praises, this is mischievous indeed.

Deuteronomy 8:11. 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:

Whenever we see the word "Beware" in the Bible, we may be sure that there is something to beware of. The point here to note is, that our times of prosperity are times of danger. I remember that Mr. Whitefield once asked the prayers of the congregation "for a young gentleman in very dangerous circumstances," for he had just come into a fortune of \$5,000. Then is the time when prayer is needed even more than in seasons of depression and of loss.

That would be practical atheism; not keeping the commandments of God, is one of the most vivid ways of forgetting him.

Deuteronomy 8:12-16. Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, an all that thou hast is multiplied; 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; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fury serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; 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;

Why do we get these passages repeated? Surely it is because we have such slippery memories, and the Lord has to tell his children the same thing over and over again: "precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;" because we so soon forget.

The other day, a friend asked me this question, "Whence does God get his princes?" and the answer I gave was, "He often picks them off dunghills." Oh, but they sometimes forget the dunghills where they grew, and think themselves wonderfully important individuals! Then there is a time of pulling down for them. We cannot eat and be full without having the temptation of getting our heart lifted up. It is a great blessing to have the heart lifted up in one way, that is, in God's ways; but to be lifted up by bread, to be lifted up by silver, to be lifted up by flocks and herds, is such a bad way of being lifted up that evil and sorrow must come of it.

See, the Lord does not forbid his people to build a house, or to eat and to enjoy what he gives them; but he does charge them not to forget the God who gave them these mercies, nor to forget where they used to be in slavery: "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

Deuteronomy 8:16. 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;

I cannot but pause as I recollect my own passage through "that great and terrible wilderness, where there was no water." When a soul is under conviction of sin, "fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought" are very feeble images of the pains and miseries that come of guilt unforgiven.

"Where there was no water." Oh! what would we not have given then to have understood a little of that gospel which, perhaps, we now despise? Oh! what would we not have given then just to have moistened our burning lips with the living water of the precious Word in which, possibly, now we see no refreshing? May God have mercy upon us for our forgetfulness of his great mercy! Let us, with deep gratitude, think of him again: "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." "More likely," says one, "to bring fire rather than water out of a rock of flint;" and it did seem as if the cross of the curse must have cursed us, yet it blessed us. The Lord brought forth living water out of that Rock which was smitten for guilty man.

Deuteronomy 8:16, 17. 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; and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this 'wealth.

We must not say this either about temporal or spiritual wealth. If we have grown in grace, and have become useful, and are spiritually a blessing to others, we must not take any credit for it to ourselves; or else down we shall go before long. God did not enrich thee that thou mightest set up for a god in opposition to him. Christ did not love thee that thou mightest make thyself a rival to him. Oh, that must not be! We must never say in our heart, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth."

Deuteronomy 8:17–20. And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. 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. 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. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish;

"If you sin as they do, you shall fare as they do."

Deuteronomy 8:18, 19. 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. 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.

If you live like sinners, you will die like sinners. "Where, then, is the perseverance of the saints?" asks one. Why, in this, that they shall not live like sinners! God's grace will not let them go wandering after idols, to worship and to serve them. He will keep us faithful to himself; but if we will wander after idol gods, it proves that we are not the Lord's true Israel, and we must expect to be served as others have been who have turned aside to worship idols,-

Deuteronomy 8:20. Because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God

That Sabbatical year had other blessings connected with it. Let us read about them in the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter fifteen.

Deuteronomy 15

Deuteronomy 15:1, 2. At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbor, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release. What a wonderful title for it, "the LORD'S release"!

Deuteronomy 15:3. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;

How was a man to pay when he did not sow or reap during the Sabbatical year? The foreigner did not observe the year of rest; consequently he was bound to pay, and it was only fair that he should do so; but for the Israelite, who carried out the divine law,

there was provision made if he was in debt.

Deuteronomy 15:4. Save when there shall be no poor among you;

If there were no poor, then there would be no need for this law.

Deuteronomy 15:4-6. For the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: 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. For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee:

That little clause, "as he promised thee," is worth noticing. This is the rule of God; he deals with us "according to promise."

Deuteronomy 15:6. 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.

If God's people had done his will, they would have been like their language; it is observed of the Hebrew by some, that it borrows nothing from other tongues, but lends many words to various languages.

Deuteronomy 15:7-9. 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 thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. 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 nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Moses, moved by the Spirit of God, anticipates what would very naturally occur to many: "Then I shall not lend anywhere near the seventh year; if I do, I shall lose it, for I must release my debtor then." The hard-hearted would be sure to make this their evil excuse for lending nothing. But here the Hebrew is warned against such wicked thoughts, lest, refusing to lend to his poor brother for this cause, the needy one should cry to God, and it should be accounted sin on the part of the merciless refuser.

Deuteronomy 15:10, 11. 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. For the poor shall never cease out of the land:

They would have done so, they might have done so, if the rule of God had been kept; but inasmuch as he foresaw that it never would be kept, he also declared, "the poor shall never cease out of the land."

Deuteronomy 15:11. Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

See how God calls them, not "the poor", but "thy poor" and "thy needy." The Church of God should feel a peculiar property in the poor and needy, as if they were handed over, in the love of Christ to his people, that they might care for them.

Deuteronomy 15:12. And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

He might be under an apprenticeship of servitude for six years; but the seventh year was to be a year of rest to him, as it was a year of release to debtors, and of rest to the land.

Deuteronomy 15:13. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

To begin life again with nothing at all in his pocket.

Deuteronomy 15:14. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

Who would think of finding such a law as that on the statute-book? Where is there such a law under any governor but God? The Theocracy would have made a grand government for Israel if Israel had but been able to walk before God in faith and obedience.

Deuteronomy 15:15. 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.

The remembrance of their own deliverance out of Egyptian bondage was to make them merciful and kind to their own bondservants.

Deuteronomy 15:16-18. 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; then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. 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;

He has had no pay; he has been always at his work; he has been worth two ordinary hired laborers; let him go, therefore, and let him not go away empty.

Deuteronomy 29

Deuteronomy 29:1. These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

That is the preamble, just as in legal documents there is usually some statement of the purport and intent of the indenture before the matter is proceeded with. These covenants with God are solemn things, and therefore are they given in a formal manner to strike attention, and command our serious thoughts.

Deuteronomy 29:2–4. 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; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.

You saw all that, and yet did not see it; you saw the external work, but the internal lesson you did not perceive. A very mournful statement to make; but God's servants are not sent to flatter man but to speak the truth, however painful the speaking of it may be.

Deuteronomy 29:5, 6. 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. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God.

Either there had been means of frequent renewal of their garments, or else by a miracle these garments had never worn out; and the very shoes that they put upon their feet on the Passover night were on their feet still; if not the same yet still they were shod, though they trod the weary wilderness which well might have worn them till they were bare. "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink:" — a nation of total abstainers for forty years. There was no bread in the wilderness for them, and there was no wine. It may have been obtained as a great luxury, as it probably was, for we have reason to believe that Nadab and Abihu were slain by fire before the Lord because they were drunken when they offered strange fire; but taking the whole people around, anything like wine had not crossed their lips for forty years, yet there they were, strong and healthy. "That ye may know that I am Jehovah your God.

Deuteronomy 29:7. 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:

People not used to war either, and feeble folk, yet they smote the great kings and slew mighty kings, for the Lord was with them.

Deuteronomy 29:8, 9. 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. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

This, then, was the covenant made with the nation, that God should be their God and he would prosper them: as he had done, so would he do: he would be their protector, defender, strength, and crown and joy.

Deuteronomy 29:10, 11. 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, 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:

This national covenant embraced all the great men, the captains, the wise men, all that were in authority, "your elders, and your officers." It took in all their children, for it was a covenant according to the flesh, and their children according to the flesh are included. "Your wives," too, for in this matter there was no sex. "The stranger also." Here we poor Gentiles get a glimpse of comfort, even though from that old covenant we seem to be shut out. "Thy stranger that is in thy camp" is included. And the poorest, and those that performed the most menial service, were all to be made partakers of this covenant, "from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water."

Deuteronomy 29:12–15. 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: that he may establish thee today 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.

Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; 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:

With the sick that were at home, with the generations that were not yet born, for this was intended to be a national covenant in perpetuity to their children and their children's children to the end of time. Had they kept it so would it have stood.

Deuteronomy 29:16, 17. (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; and ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:)

Now you have seen how they worshipped idols; you have seen that you may avoid; you have beheld their folly that you may escape from it.

Deuteronomy 29:18. 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;

For the worship of false gods is the cause of untold mischief and evil: wherever it is found it is a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and God would not have it in a single individual, man nor woman, nay, not in a single family or tribe.

Deuteronomy 29:19. And it come 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:

For there were some who so hardened themselves against God that they said, "We shall have peace: let us do what we like: let us worship these idol gods more and more and more: let us add drunkenness and idolatry to our thirst."

Deuteronomy 29:20. 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,

Not light upon him, but lie upon him, rest there and stop there.

Deuteronomy 29:20, 21. And the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel,

As a huntsman separates a stag from the herd that he may hunt it all the day, so shall God with any idolater that should come amongst his people with whom he made a covenant that day. Oh, how God hates that anything should be worshipped by us but himself: how indignant is he if anywhere anything takes the supreme place in the human heart which ought to be occupied by God alone.

Deuteronomy 32

Deuteronomy 32:1. Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of mouth.

Because men are so slow of hearing, Moses calls on the heavens and the earth to bear witness against them; and because of the sublimity of his subject, he calls upon the heavens and the earth to pay attention to it.

Deuteronomy 32:2. 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:

It is good preaching, and good hearing too, when the gospel comes like a gentle shower which saturates and soaks into the soil, and refreshes and makes it fruitful; may God the Holy Spirit make it to be so whenever we gather together for worship! The Word of the Lord may be as a driving hail, breaking everything upon which it falls, and so becoming the savor of death unto death. But may God. make it to us as the dew and the small rain from heaven., that it may be a savor of life unto life!

Deuteronomy 32:3–5. Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves:

What a contrast there is between the incorruptible and immutable God and corruptible man! "They have corrupted themselves,"—

Deuteronomy 32:5. Their spot is not the spot of his children,: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

God's children have spots,—the spot caused, by sin, which are recognized, mourned over, and struggled against by them; the ungodly have the same sort of spots but they have no repentance concerning the sin which causes them.

Deuteronomy 32:6. 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?

Sin is the basest form of ingratitude. We owe everything to God, and we ought therefore to treat him as our Creator and Father should be treated. On the contrary, how often have we requited him evil for good, and acted as if we regarded him as our enemy rather than as our best Friend!

Deuteronomy 32:7, 8. Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. 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.

His first thought was concerning his own people. He provided Canaan for them; it was just the very land for them, with space enough, and yet with not too much room, so that they might cultivate it all, and prove it to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet these special thoughts of God, with regard to his own chosen people, did not exclude kind thoughts towards the rest of mankind, for "he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people," that is, the people belonging to other nations; but, still, his deepest and his highest thoughts were concerning the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:9, 10. For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. 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.

And is not this also a true description of God's love and kindness to you and to me, beloved in the Lord? Did he not find us in the wilderness? Has he not led us about, trod by our experience instructed us, and has he not guarded us with as much watchful care as a man bestows upon the apple of his eye? Oh, blessed be his holy name, we owe everything to him! He giveth us everything that we have.

Deuteronomy 32:11–14. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. 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 rocky 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.

God fed his ancient people with the best of the best, and gave it to them with no stinted hand; and, oh! when I think of the spiritual food which God has prepared for his people, surely "butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs," and all such carnal things are but poor in comparison with the provisions of his grace. In a spiritual sense, the Lord hath indeed given to us "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of mallow, of wines on the lees well refined."

But now look again at the contrast between the Lord and his ancient people. God's great goodness makes man's sin appear all the blacker:—

Deuteronomy 32:15. 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.

Many can endure the trials of adversity who cannot escape the perils of prosperity. Solomon truly said, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise;" and many a man has failed in that time of testing. When you come to be wealthy, to be admired, to receive honor among men, then is the time of your severest trial.

Deuteronomy 32:16, 17. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. 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.

Moses multiples expressions to show the folly of Israel's idolatry. Only think of "new gods that came newly up," as if that which is new could be a god! The same thing may be said of the "new truth" of which we hear so much nowadays. That which is new cannot be true. Certainly, there is nothing new in theology but that which is utterly false.

The idols, which the Israelites worshipped, were not only new gods, but they were strange gods, which their fathers feared not. Worse than that, they were demons: "they sacrificed unto devils not to God." How low had even the chosen people sunk!

Deuteronomy 32:18–27. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. 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. 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 thorn to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 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. I will heap mischiefs upon them, I will spend mine arrows upon them. 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. The sword without and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners? I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not—

Here is a sweet word of grace amid the just judgments of Jehovah: "Were it not"—

Deuteronomy 32:27. 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.

So he spared, them for his own name's sake; and, to this day, when God can find no other reason for showing mercy to the guilty, he does it for his name's sake; and this is a blessed plea, to be urged by a man who can see no reason why God should have mercy upon him. He may say, "Lord, do it for thy name's sake, to make thy grace and thy mercy illustrious, in the salvation of such a poor, hopeless wretch as I am."

Deuteronomy 32:28–32. For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! 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? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine—

That is, the vine of God's enemies,-

Deuteronomy 32:32–34. Is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?

What, a striking and startling question that is, as though God laid up the memory of man's sin, sealed it up, and kept it in a secret place against the day when he shall call sinners to account, and visit them for their iniquities! What an awful thing it is to have the sins of one's youth laid up, sealed up, and put away in God's treasury; and the sins of middle life, and perhaps the sins of old age, too, to be brought out, by-and-by, and laid to our charge! Who shall be able to stand in that great day? Only those who are washed in the blood: and robed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Deuteronomy 32:35–38. To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; 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. For the LORD shall judge his people/and reprint himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, 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.

To you who trust in anything except God, the day will come when you will hear such terrible words as these—"Now let your riches save you, let your pleasures and your vices cheer you; go ye now in your own wicked ways, and see if you can find any comfort in them!" What holy sarcasm there is in these words, which will cut to the quick the conscience when it is once fairly aroused!

Deuteronomy 32:39–43. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. 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. 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. 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.

It is only in mercy, you see, that the Lord deals with his people; they cannot stand before him on the ground of justice, but in his mercy is their place of refuge. May we all find that mercy by fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in Christ Jesus and his glorious gospel! Amen.