

INTRODUCTION TO DEUT. CHAPTER 8

Moses had charged parents in teaching their children to whet the word of God upon them (#De 6:7) by frequent repetition of the same things over and over again; and here he himself takes the same method of instructing the Israelites as his children, frequently inculcating the same precepts and cautions, with the same motives or arguments to enforce them, that what they heard so often might abide with them. In this chapter Moses gives them,

I. General exhortations to obedience, #De 8:1,6.

II. A review of the great things God had done for them in the wilderness, as a good argument for obedience, #De 8:2-5,15,16.

III. A prospect of the good land into which God would now bring them, #De 8:7-9.

IV. A necessary caution against the temptations of a prosperous condition, #De 8:10-14, and #De 17,18.

V. A fair warning of the fatal consequences of apostasy from God, #De 8:19,20.

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 9.

The charge here given them is the same as before, to keep and do all God's commandments. Their obedience must be,

1. Careful: *Observe to do.*

2. Universal: *To do all the commandments, #De 8:1.* And,

3. From a good principle, with a regard to God as the Lord, and their God, and particularly with a holy fear of him (#De 8:6), from a reverence of his majesty, a submission to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. To engage them to this obedience, besides the great advantages of it, which he sets before them (that they should *live and multiply*, and all should be well with them, #De 8:1), he directs them,

I. To look back upon the wilderness through which God had now brought them: *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, #De 8:2.* Now that they had come of age, and were entering upon their inheritance, they must be reminded of the discipline they had been under during their minority and the method God had taken to train them up for himself. The wilderness was the school in which they had been for forty years boarded and taught, under tutors and governors; and this was a time to bring it all to remembrance. The occurrences of these last forty years were very memorable and well worthy to be remembered, very useful and profitable to be remembered, as yielding a complication of arguments for obedience; and they were recorded on purpose that they might be remembered. As the feast of the passover was a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, so was the feast of tabernacles of their passage through the wilderness. Note, It is very good for us to remember all the ways both of God's providence and grace, by which he has led us hitherto through this wilderness, that we may be prevailed with cheerfully to serve him and trust in him. Here let us set up our Ebenezer.

1. They must remember the straits they were sometimes brought into,

(1.) For the mortifying of their pride; it was to *humble* them, that they might not be exalted above measure with the abundance of miracles that were wrought in their favour, and that they might not be secure, and confident of being in Canaan immediately.

(2.) For the manifesting of their perverseness: to *prove* them, that they and others might know (for God himself perfectly knew it before) all that was in their heart, and might see that God chose them not for any thing in them that might recommend them to his favour, for their whole carriage was untoward and provoking. Many commandments God gave them which there would have been no occasion for if they had not been led through the wilderness, as those relating to the manna (#Ex 16:28); and God thereby tried them, as our first parents were tried by the trees of the garden, whether they would keep God's commandments or not. Or God thereby proved them whether they would trust his promises, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, and, in dependence on his promises, obey his precepts.

2. They must remember the supplies which were always granted them.

(1.) God himself took particular care of their food, raiment, and health; and what would they have more?

[1.] They had manna for food (#De 8:3): *God suffered them to hunger, and the fed them with manna*, that the extremity of their want might make the supply the more acceptable, and God's goodness to them therein the more remarkable. God often brings his people low, that he may have the honour of helping them. And thus the manna of heavenly comforts is given to those that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, #Mt 5:6. *To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*. It is said of the manna that it was a sort of food which neither *they nor their fathers knew*. And again, #De 8:16. If they knew there was such a thing that fell sometimes with the dew in those countries, as some think they did, yet it was never known to fall in such vast quantities, so constantly, and at all seasons of the year, so long, and only about a certain place. These things were altogether miraculous, and without precedent; *the Lord created a new thing* for their supply. And hereby he taught them the *man liveth not by bread alone*. Though God has appointed bread for the strengthening of man's heart, and that is ordinarily made the staff of life, yet God can, when he pleases, command support and nourishment without it, and make something else, very unlikely, to answer the intention as well. We might live upon air if it were sanctified for that use by *the word of God*; for the means God ordinarily uses he is not tied to, but can perform his kind purposes to his people without them. Our Saviour quotes this scripture in answer to that temptation of Satan, *Command that these stones be made bread*.

"What need of that?"

says Christ;

"my heavenly Father can keep me alive without bread,"

#Mt 4:3,4. Let none of God's children distrust their Father, nor take any sinful indirect course for the supply of their own necessities; some way or other, God will provide for them in the way of duty and honest diligence, *and verily they shall be fed*. It may be applied spiritually; the *word of God*, as it is the revelation of God's will and grace duly received and entertained by faith, is the food of the soul, the life which is supported by that is the life of the man, and not only that life which is supported by bread. The manna typified Christ, *the bread of life*. He is *the Word of God*; by him we live. The Lord evermore give us that bread which endures to eternal life, and let us not be put off with the *meat that*

perisheth!

[2.] The same clothes served them from Egypt to Canaan, at least the generality of them. Though they had no change of raiment, yet it was always new, and waxed not old upon them, **#De 8:4**. This was a standing miracle, and the greater if, as the Jews say, they grew with them, so as to be always fit for them. But it is plain that they brought out of Egypt bundles of clothes on their shoulders (**#Ex 12:34**), which they might barter with each other as there was occasion; and these, with what they wore, sufficed till they came into a country where they could furnish themselves with new clothes.

(2.) By the method God took of providing food and raiment for them

[1.] He humbled them. It was a mortification to them to be tied for forty years together to the same meat, without any varieties, and to the same clothes, in the same fashion. Thus he taught them that the good things he designed for them were figures of better things, and that the happiness of man consists not in being clothed in *purple or fine linen*, and in *faring sumptuously every day*, but in being taken into covenant and communion with God, and in *learning his righteous judgements*. God's law, which was given to Israel in the wilderness, must be to them instead of food and raiment.

[2.] He proved them, whether they could trust him to provide for them when means and second causes failed. Thus he taught them to live in a dependence upon Providence, and not to perplex themselves with care *what they should eat and drink*, and *wherewithal they should be clothed*. Christ would have his disciples learn the same lesson (**#Mt 6:25**), and took a like method to teach it to them, *when he sent them out without purse or scrip*, and yet took care that *they lacked nothing*, **#Lk 22:35**.

[3.] God took care of their health and ease. Though they travelled on foot in a dry country, the way rough and untrodden, yet their *feet swelled not*. God preserved them from taking hurt by the inconveniences of their journey; and mercies of this kind we ought to acknowledge. Note, Those that follow God's conduct are not only safe but easy. Our feet swell not while we keep in the way of duty; it is the *way of transgression that is hard*, **#Pr 13:15**. God had promised to *keep the feet of his saints*, **#1Sa 2:9**.

3. They must also remember the rebukes they had been under, **#De 8:5**. During these years of their education they had been kept under a strict discipline, and not without need. *As a man chasteneth his son*, for his good, and because he loves him, so *the Lord thy God chasteneth thee*. God is a loving tender Father to all his children, yet when there is occasion they shall feel the smart of the rod. Israel did so: they were chastened that they might not be condemned, chastened with the rod of men. Not as a man wounds and slays his enemies whose destruction he aims at, but as a man chastens his son whose happiness and welfare he designs: so did their God chasten them; he chastened and taught them, **#Ps 94:12**. This they must *consider in their heart*, that is, they must own it from their own experience that God had corrected them with a fatherly love, for which they must return to him a filial reverence and compliance. Because God has chastened thee as a father, *therefore* (**#De 8:6**) *thou shalt keep his commandments*. This use we should make of all our afflictions; by them let us be engaged and quickened to our duty. Thus they are directed to look back upon the wilderness.

II. He directs them to look forward to Canaan, into which God was now bringing them. Look which way we will, both our reviews and our prospects will furnish us with arguments for obedience. Observe,

1. The land which they were now going to take possession of is here described to be a very good land, having every thing in it that was desirable, **#De 8:7-9**.

(1.) It was *well watered, like Eden, the garden of the Lord. It was a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths*, which contributed to the fruitfulness of the soil. Perhaps there was a greater plenty of water there now than in Abraham's time, the Canaanites having found and digged wells; so that Israel reaped the fruit of their industry as well as of God's bounty.

(2.) The ground produced great plenty of all good things, not only for the necessary support, but for the convenience and comfort of human life. In their fathers' land they had bread enough; it was corn land, a land of wheat and barley, where, with the common care and labour of the husbandman, they might eat bread without scarceness. It was a fruitful land, that was never turned into barrenness but for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein. They had not only water enough to quench their thirst, but vines, the fruit whereof was ordained to make glad the heart. And, if they were desirous of dainties, they needed not to send to far countries for them, when their own was so well stocked with fig-trees, and pomegranates, olives of the best kind, and honey, or *date-trees*, as some think it should be read.

(3.) Even the bowels of its earth were very rich, though it should seem that *silver and gold they had none*; of these the princes of Sheba should bring presents (**#Ps 72:10,15**); yet they had plenty of those more serviceable metals, iron and brass. Iron-stone and mines of brass were found in their hills. See **#Job 28:2**.

2. These things are mentioned,

(1.) To show the great difference between that wilderness through which God had led them and the good land into which he was bringing them. Note, Those that bear the inconveniences of an afflicted state with patience and submission, are humbled by them and prove well under them, are best prepared for better circumstances.

(2.) To show what obligations they lay under to keep God's commandments, both in gratitude for his favours to them and from a regard to their own interest, that the favours might be continued. The only way to keep possession of this good land would be to keep in the way of their duty.

(3.) To show what a figure it was of good things to come. Whatever others saw, it is probable that Moses in it saw a type of the better country: The gospel church is the New-Testament Canaan, watered with the Spirit in his gifts and graces, planted with the trees of righteousness, bearing the fruits of righteousness. Heaven is the good land, in which there is nothing wanting, and where there is a fulness of joy.

Ver. 10. thru Ver. 20.

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

I. He directs them to the duty of a prosperous condition, **#De 8:10**. They are allowed to eat even to fulness, not to surfeiting no excess; but let them always remember their benefactor, the founder of their feast, and never fail to give thanks after meat: *Then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God*.

1. They must take heed of eating or drinking so much as to indispose themselves for this duty of blessing God, rather aiming to serve God therein with so much the more cheerfulness and enlargement.
2. They must not have any fellowship with those that, when they had eaten and were full, blessed false gods, as the Israelites themselves had done in their worship of the golden calf, **#Ex 32:6**.
3. Whatever they had the comfort of God must have the glory of. As our Saviour has taught us to bless before we eat (**#Mt 14:19,20**), so we are here taught to bless after meat. That is our *Hosanna--God bless*; this is our *Hallelujah--Blessed be God. In every thing we must give thanks*. From this law the religious Jews took up a laudable usage of blessing God, not only at their solemn meals, but upon other occasions; if they drank a cup of wine they lifted up their hands and said, *Blessed be he that created the fruit of the vine to make glad the heart*. If they did but smell at a flower, they said, *Blessed be he that made this flower sweet*.
4. When they gave thanks for the fruits of the land they must give thanks for the fruits of the land itself, which was given them by promise From all our comfortable enjoyments we must take occasion to thank God for our comfortable settlements; and I know not but we of this nation have as much reason as they had to give thanks for a good land.

II. He arms them against the temptations of a prosperous condition, and charges them to stand upon their guard against them:

"When thou art settled in goodly houses of thy own building,"

#De 8:12 (for though God gave them houses which they builded not, **#De 6:10**, these would not serve them, they must have larger and finer), --

"and when thou hast grown *rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold* (**#De 8:13**), as Abraham (**#Ge 13:2**), --*when all thou hast is multiplied*,"

1.

"Then take heed of pride. Beware *lest then thy heart be lifted up*,"

#De 8:14. When the estate rises, the mind is apt to rise with it, in self-conceit, self-complacency, and self-confidence. Let us therefore strive to keep the spirit low in a high condition; humility is both the ease and the ornament of prosperity. Take heed of saying, so much as in thy heart, that proud word, *My power, even the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth*, **#De 8:17**. Note, We must never take the praise of our prosperity to ourselves, nor attribute it to our ingenuity or industry; for bread is not always *to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding*, **#Ec 9:11**. It is spiritual idolatry thus to *sacrifice to our own net*, **#Hab 1:16**.

2.

"Then take heed of forgetting God."

This follows upon the lifting up on the heart; for it is through the pride of the countenance that the wicked seek not after God, **#Ps 10:4**. Those that admire themselves despise God.

(1.)

"Forget not thy duty to God."

#De 8:11. We forget God if we keep not his commandments; we forget his authority over us, and our obligations to him and expectations from him, if we are not obedient to his laws. When men grow rich they are tempted to think religion a needless thing. They are happy without it, think it a thing below them and too hard upon them. Their dignity forbids them to stoop, and their liberty forbids them to serve. But we are basely ungrateful if the better God is to us the worse we are to him.

(2.)

"Forget not God's former dealings with thee. Thy deliverance out of Egypt, #De 8:14. The provision he made for thee in the wilderness, that great and terrible wilderness."

They must never forget the impressions which the horror of that wilderness made upon them; see **#Jer 2:6**, where it is called the very *shadow of death*. There God preserved them from being destroyed by the fiery serpents and scorpions, though sometimes he made use of them for their correction: there he kept them from perishing for want of water, following them with water out of a rock of flint (**#De 8:15**), out of which (says bishop Patrick) one would rather have expected fire than water. There he fed them with manna, of which before (**#De 8:3**), taking care to keep them alive, that he *might do them good at their latter end*, **#De 8:16**. Note, God reserves the best till the last for his Israel. However he may seem to deal hardly with them by the way, he will not fail to do them good at their latter end.

(3.)

"Forget not God's hand in thy present prosperity, #De 8:18. Remember it is he that giveth thee wealth; for he giveth thee power to get wealth."

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

III. He repeats the fair warning he had often given them of the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God, **#De 8:19,20**. Observe,

1. How he describes the sin; it is forgetting God, and then worshipping other gods. What wickedness will not those fall into that keep thoughts of God out of their minds? And, when once the affections are displaced from God, they will soon be misplaced upon lying vanities.

2. How he denounces wrath and ruin against them for it:

"If you do so, you shall surely perish, and the power and might of your hands, which you are so proud of, cannot help you. Nay, you shall perish as the nations that are

driven out before you. God will make no more account of you, notwithstanding his covenant with you and your relation to him, than he does of them, if you will not be obedient and faithful to him."

Those that follow others in sin will certainly follow them to destruction. If we do as sinners do, we must expect to fare as sinners fare.