

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 11

With this chapter Moses concludes his preface to the repetition of the statutes and judgments which they must observe to do. He repeats the general charge (#De 11:1), and, having in the close of the foregoing chapter begun to mention the great things God had done among them, in this,

- I. He specifies several of the great works God had done before their eyes, #De 11:2-7.
- II. He sets before them, for the future, life and death, the blessing and the curse, according as they did, or did not, keep God's commandments, that they should certainly prosper if they were obedient, should be blessed with plenty of all good things (#De 11:8-15), and with victory over their enemies, and the enlargement of their coast thereby, #De 11:22-25. But their disobedience would undoubtedly be their ruin, #De 11:16,17.
- III. He directs them what means to use that they might keep in mind the law of God, #De 11:18-21. And,
- IV. Concludes all with solemnly charging them to choose which they would have, the blessing or the curse, #De 11:26-32.

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 7.

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

Mention is made of the great and terrible works of God which their eyes *had seen*, #De 11:7. This part of his discourse Moses addresses to the *seniors* among the people, the elders in age; and probably the elders in office were so, and were now his immediate auditors: there were some among them that could remember their deliverance out of Egypt, all above fifty, and to them he speaks this, not to the children, who knew it by hearsay only, #De 11:2. Note, God's mercies to us when we were young we should remember and retain the impressions of when we are old; what our eyes have seen, especially in our early days, has affected us, and should be improved by us long after. They had seen what terrible judgments God had executed upon the enemies of Israel's peace,

1. Upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians that enslaved them. What a fine country was ruined and laid waste by one plague after another, to force Israel's enlargement! #De 11:3. What a fine army was entirely drowned in the Red Sea, to prevent Israel's being reenslaved! #De 11:4. Thus did he give *Egypt for their ransom*, #Isa 43:3. Rather shall that famous kingdom be destroyed than that Israel shall not be delivered.
2. Upon Dathan and Abiram that embroiled them. Remember *what he did in the wilderness* (#De 11:5), by how many necessary *chastisements* (as they are called, #De 11:2) they were kept from ruining themselves, particularly when those daring

Reubenites defied the authority of Moses and headed a dangerous rebellion against God himself, which threatened the ruin of a whole nation, and might have ended in that if the divine power had not immediately crushed the rebellion by burying the rebels alive, them and *all that was in their possession*, #De 11:6. What was done against them, though misinterpreted by the disaffected party (#Nu 16:41), was really done in mercy to Israel. To be saved from the mischiefs of insurrections at home is as great a kindness to a people, and therefore lays them under as strong obligations, as protection from the invasion of enemies abroad.

Ver. 8. thru Ver. 17.

Still Moses urges the same subject, as loathe to conclude till he had gained his point.

"If thou wilt enter into life, if thou wilt enter into Canaan, a type of that life, and find it a good land indeed to thee, keep the commandments: Keep all the commandments which I command you this day; love God, and serve him with all your heart."

I. Because this was the way to get and keep possession of the promised land.

1. It was the way to get possession (#De 11:8): That you may be strong for war, and so go in and possess it. So little did they know either of hardship or hazard in the wars of Canaan that he does not say they should go in and fight for it; no, they had nothing in effect to do but go in and possess it. He does not go about to teach them the art of war, how to draw the bow, and use the sword, and keep ranks, that they might be strong, and go in and possess the land; no, but let them keep God's commandments, and their religion, while they are true to it, will be their strength, and secure their success.

(2.) It was the way to keep possession (#De 11:9): *That you may prolong your days in this land that your eye is upon.* Sin tends to the shortening of the days of particular persons and to the shortening of the days of a people's prosperity; but obedience will be a lengthening out of their tranquillity.

II. Because the land of Canaan, into which they were going, had a more sensible dependence upon the blessing of heaven than the land of Egypt had, #De 11:10-12. Egypt was a country fruitful enough, but it was all flat, and was watered, not as other countries with rain (it is said of Egypt, #Zec 14:18, *that it has no rain*), but by the overflowing of the river Nile at a certain season of the year, to the improving of which there was necessary a great deal of the art and labour of the husbandman, so that in Egypt a man must bestow as much cost and pains upon a field as upon a garden of herbs. And this made them the more apt to imagine that the power of their own hands got them this wealth. But the land of Canaan was an uneven country, a land of hills and valleys, which not only gave a more pleasing prospect to the eye, but yielded a greater variety of soils for the several purposes of the husbandman. It was a land that had no great rivers in it, except Jordan, *but drank water of the rain of heaven, and so,*

1. Saved them a great deal of labour. While the Egyptians were ditching and guttering in the fields, up to the knees in mud, to bring water to their land, which otherwise would soon become like the heath in the wilderness, the Israelites could sit in their houses, warm and easy, and leave it to God to water their land with the former and the latter rain, which is called *the river of God* (#Ps 65:9), perhaps in allusion to, and contempt of, the river of Egypt, which that nation was so proud of. Note: The better God has provided, by our outward condition, for our ease and convenience, the more we should abound in his service: the less we have to do for our bodies the more we

should do for God and our souls.

2. So he directed them to look upwards to God, *who giveth us rain form heaven and fruitful seasons (#Ac 14:17)*, and promised to be himself as the dew unto Israel, *#Ho 14:5*. Note,

(1.) Mercies bring with them the greatest comfort and sweetness when we see them coming from heaven, the immediate gifts of divine Providence.

(2.) The closer dependence we have upon God the more cheerful we should be in our obedience to him. See how Moses here magnifies the land of Canaan above all other lands, that the eyes of God were always upon it, that is, they should be so, to see that nothing was wanting, while they kept close to God and duty; its fruitfulness should be not so much the happy effect of its soil as the immediate fruit of the divine blessing; this may be inferred from its present state, for it is said to be at this day, now that God has departed from it, as barren a spot of ground as perhaps any under heaven. Call it not Naomi: call it Marah.

III. Because God would certainly bless them with an abundance of all good things if they would love him and serve him (*#De 11:13-15*): I will give you the rain of your land in due season, so that they should neither want it when the ground called for it nor have it in excess; but they should have the former rain, which fell at seed time, and the latter rain, which fell before the harvest, *#Am 4:7*. This represented all the seasonable blessings which God would bestow upon them, especially spiritual comforts, which should come as the latter and former, rain, *#Ho 6:3*. And the earth thus watered produced,

1. Fruits for the service of man, corn and wine, and oil, *#Ps 104:13-15*.
2. Grass for the cattle, that they also might be serviceable to man, *that he might eat of them and be full, #De 11:15*. Godliness hath here the promise of the life that now is; but the favour of God shall put gladness into the heart, more than the increase of corn, and wine, and oil will.

IV. Because their revolt from God to idols. would certainly be their ruin: Take heed that your hearts be not deceived, *#De 11:16,17*. All that forsake God to set their affection upon, or pay their devotion to, any creature, will find themselves wretchedly deceived to their own destruction; and this will aggravate it that it was purely for want of taking heed. A little care would have prevented their being imposed upon by the great deceiver. To awaken them to take heed, Moses here tells them plainly that if they should turn aside to other gods,

1. They would provoke the wrath of God against them; and who knows the power of that anger?
2. Good things would be turned away from them; the heaven would withhold its rain, and then of course the earth would not yield its fruit.
3. Evil things would come upon them; they would perish quickly form off this good land. And the better the land was the more grievous it would be to perish from it. The goodness of the land would not be their security, when the badness of the inhabitants had made them ripe for ruin.

Ver. 18. thru Ver. 25.

Here,

I. Moses repeats the directions he had given for the guidance and assistance of the people in their obedience, and for the keeping up of religion among them (#De 11:18-20), which is much to the same purport with what we had before, #De 6:6, &c. Let us all be directed by the three rules here given:--

1. Let our hearts be filled with the word of God: *Lay up these words in your heart and in your soul.* The heart must be the treasury or storehouse in which the word of God must be laid up, to be used upon all occasions. We cannot expect good practices in the conversation, unless there be good thoughts, good affections, and good principles, in the heart.

2. Let our eyes be fixed upon the word of God.

"Bind these words for a sign *upon your hand*, which is always in view (#Isa 49:16), *and as frontlets between your eyes*, which you cannot avoid the sight of; let them be as ready and familiar to you, and have your eye as constantly upon them, as if they were *written upon your door-posts*, and could not be overlooked either when you go out or when you come in."

Thus we must *lay God's judgments before us*, having a constant regard to them, as the guide of our way, as the rule of our work, #Ps 119:30.

3. Let our tongues be employed about the word of God. Let it be the subject of our familiar discourse, wherever we are; especially with our children, who must be taught the service of God, as the one thing needful, much more needful than either the rules of decency or the calling they must live by in this world. Great care and pains must be taken to acquaint children betimes, and to affect them, with the word of God and the wondrous things of his law. Nor will any thing contribute more to the prosperity and perpetuity of religion in a nation than the good education of children: if the seed be holy, it is the substance of a land.

II. He repeats the assurances he had before given them, in God's name, of prosperity and success if they were obedient.

1. They should have a happy settlement, #De 11:21. Their days should be multiplied; and, when they were fulfilled, the days of their children likewise should be many, as the days of heaven, that is, Canaan should be sure to them and their heirs for ever, as long as the world stands, if they did not by their own sin throw themselves out of it.

2. It should not be in the power of their enemies to give them any disturbance, nor make them upon any account uneasy.

"If you will *keep God's commandments*, and be careful to do your duty (#De 11:22), God will not only crown the labours of the husbandman with plenty of the fruits of the earth, but he will own and succeed the more glorious undertakings of the men of war. Victory shall attend your arms; which way soever they turn, God will drive out these nations, and put you in possession of their land,"

#De 11:23,24. Their territories should be enlarged to the utmost extent of the promise, #Ge 15:18. And all their neighbours should stand in awe of them, #De 11:25. Nothing contributes more to the making of a nation considerable abroad, valuable to its friends and formidable to its enemies, than religion reigning in it; for who can be against those that

have God for them? And he is certainly for those that are sincerely for him, **#Pr 14:34**.

Ver. 26. thru Ver. 32.

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

I. He sums up all his arguments for obedience in two words, *the blessing and the curse* (**#De 11:26**), that is, the rewards and the punishments, as they stand in the promises and the threatenings, which are the great sanctions of the law, taking hold of hope and fear, those two handles of the soul, by which it is caught, held, and managed. These two, the blessing and the curse, he set before them, that is,

1. He explained them, that they might know them; he enumerated the particulars contained both in the blessing and in the curse, that they might see the more fully how desirable the blessing was, and how dreadful the curse.
2. He confirmed them, that they might believe them, made it evident to them, by the proofs he produced of his own commission, that the blessing was not a fool's paradise, nor the curse a bugbear, but that both were real declarations of the purpose of God concerning them.
3. He charged them to choose which of these they would have, so fairly does he deal with them, and so far is he from putting out the eyes of these men, as he was charged, **#Nu 16:14**. They and we are plainly told on what terms we stand with Almighty God.

(1.) If we be obedient to his laws, we may be sure of a blessing, **#De 11:27**. But,

(2.) If we be disobedient, we may be as sure of a curse, **#De 11:28**. *Say you to the righteous* (for God has said it, and all the world cannot unsay it) *that it shall be well with them: but woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them.*

II. He appoints a public and solemn proclamation to be made of the blessing and curse which he had set before them, upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, **#De 11:29,30**. We have more particular directions for this solemnity in **#De 27:11**, &c., and an account of the performance of it, **#Jos 8:33**, &c. It was to be done, and was done, immediately upon their coming into Canaan, that when they first took possession of that land they might know upon what terms they stood. The place where this was to be done is particularly described by Moses, though he never saw it, which is one circumstance among many that evidences his divine instructions. It is said be near the plain, or oaks, or meadows, of Moreh, which was one of the first places that Abraham came to in Canaan; so that in sending them thither, to hear the blessing and the curse, God reminded them of the promise he made to Abraham in that very place, **#Ge 12:6,7**. The mention of this appointment here serves,

1. For the encouragement of their faith in the promise of God, that they should be masters of Canaan quickly. Do it (says Moses) on the other side Jordan (**#De 11:30**), for you may be confident you shall pass over Jordan, **#De 11:31**. The institution of this service to be done in Canaan was an assurance to them that they should be brought into possession of it, and a token like that which God gave to Moses (**#Ex 3:12**): *You shall serve God upon this mountain*. And,

2. It serves for an engagement upon them to be obedient, that they might escape that curse, and obtain that blessing, which, besides what they had already heard, they must shortly be witnesses to the solemn publication of ([#De 11:32](#)):

"You shall observe to do the statutes and judgements, that you may not in that solemnity be witnesses against yourselves."