

INTRODUCTION TO DEUT. CHAPTER 30

One would have thought that the threatenings in the close of the foregoing chapter had made a full end of the people of Israel, and had left their case for ever desperate; but in this chapter we have a plain intimation of the mercy God had in store for them in the latter days, so that mercy at length rejoices against judgment, and has the last word. Here we have,

I. Exceedingly great and precious promises made to them, upon their repentance and return to God, **#De 30:1-10.**

II. The righteousness of faith set before them in the plainness and easiness of the commandment that was now given them, **#De 30:11-14.**

III. A fair reference of the whole matter to their choice, **#De 30:15-20.**

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 10.

These verses may be considered either as a conditional promise or as an absolute prediction.

I. They are chiefly to be considered as a conditional promise, and so they belong to all persons and all people, and not to Israel only; and the design of them is to assure us that the greatest sinners, if they repent and be converted, shall have their sins pardoned, and be restored to God's favour. This is the purport of the covenant of grace, it leaves room for repentance in case of misdemeanour, and promises pardon upon repentance, which the covenant of innocency did not. Now observe here,

1. How the repentance is described which is the condition of these promises.

(1.) It begins in *serious consideration*, **#De 30:1.**

"Thou shalt call to mind that which thou hadst forgotten or not regarded."

Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion. **#Isa 46:8**, *Bring to mind, O you transgressors.* The prodigal son came to himself first, and then to his father. That which they should call to mind is the blessing and the curse. If sinners would but seriously consider the happiness they have lost by sin and the misery they have brought themselves into, and that by repentance they may escape that misery and recover that happiness, they would not delay to *return to the Lord their God.* The prodigal called to mind the blessing and the curse when he considered his present poverty and the plenty of bread in his father's house, **#Lu 15:17.**

(2.) It consists in sincere conversion. The effect of the consideration cannot but be godly sorrow and shame, **#Eze 6:9 7:16.** But that which is the life and soul of repentance, and without which the most passionate expressions are but a jest, is *returning to the Lord our God*, **#De 30:2.** If thou turn (**#De 30:10**) *with all thy heart and with all thy soul.* We must return to our allegiance to God as our Lord and ruler, our dependence upon him as our Father and benefactor, our devotedness to him as our highest end, and our communion with him as our God in covenant. We must return to God from all that which stands in opposition to him or competition with him. In this return to God we must be upright--with the heart and soul, and universal--with all the heart and all the soul.

(3.) It is evidenced by a constant obedience to the holy will of God: If thou shalt *obey his*

voice (#De 30:2), *thou and thy children*; for it is not enough that we do our duty ourselves, but we must train up and engage our children to do it. Or this comes in as the condition of the entail of the blessing upon their children, provided their children kept close to their duty.

[1.] This obedience must be with an eye to God: Thou shalt *obey his voice* (#De 30:8), and hearken to it, #De 30:10.

[2.] It must be sincere, and cheerful, and entire: *With all thy heart, and with all thy soul*, #De 30:2.

[3.] It must be from a principle of love, and that love must be *with all thy heart and with all thy soul*, #De 30:6. It is the heart and soul that God looks at and requires; he will have these or nothing, and these entire or not at all.

[4.] It must be universal: *According to all that I command thee*, #De 30:2, and again #De 30:8, *to do all his commandments*; for he that allows himself in the breach of one commandment involves himself in the guilt of contemning them all, #Jas 2:10. An upright heart has *respect to all God's commandments*, #Ps 119:6.

2. What the favour is which is promised upon this repentance. Though they are brought to God by their trouble and distress, in the nations whither they were driven (#De 30:1), yet God will graciously accept of them notwithstanding; for on this errand afflictions are sent, to bring us to repentance. Though they are *driven out to the utmost parts of heaven*, yet thence their penitent prayers shall reach God's gracious ear, and there his favour shall find them out, #De 30:4. *Undique ad caelos tantundem est viae--From every place there is the same way to heaven*. This promise Nehemiah pleads in his prayer for dispersed Israel, #Ne 1:9. It is here promised,

(1.) That God would have compassion upon them, as proper objects of his pity, #De 30:3. Against sinners that go on in sin God has indignation (#De 29:20), but on those that repent and bemoan themselves he has compassion, #Jer 31:18,20. True penitents may take great encouragement from the compassions and tender mercies of our God, which never fail, but overflow.

(2.) That he would *turn their captivity, and gather them from the nations whither they were scattered* (#De 30:3), though ever so remote, #De 30:4. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts applies this to the Messiah, explaining it thus: *The word of the Lord shall gather you by the hand of Elias the great priest, and shall bring you by the hand of the king Messiah*; for this was God's covenant with him, that he should *restore the preserved of Israel*, #Isa 49:6. And this was the design of his death, to *gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad*, #Joh 11:51,52. *To him shall the gathering of the people be*.

(3.) That he would *bring them into their land again*, #De 30:5. Note, Penitent sinners are not only delivered out of their misery, but restored to true happiness in the favour of God. The land they are brought into to possess it is, though not the same, yet in some respects better than that which our first father Adam possessed, and out of which he was expelled.

(4.) That he would *do them good* (#De 30:5) and *rejoice over them for good*, #De 30:9. For there is joy in heaven upon the repentance and conversion of sinners: the father of the prodigal *rejoiced over him for good*.

(5.) That he would multiply them (#De 30:5), and that, when they grew numerous, every

mouth might have meat: he would *make them plenteous in every work of their hand*, **#De 30:9**. National repentance and reformation bring national plenty, peace, and prosperity. It is promised, *The Lord will make thee plenteous* in the fruit of thy cattle and land, for good. Many have plenty for hurt; the prosperity of fools destroys them. Then it is for good when with it God gives us grace to use it for his glory.

(6.) That he would transfer the curses they had been under to their enemies, **#De 30:7**. When God was gathering them in to reestablish them they would meet with much opposition; but the same curses that had been a burden upon them should become a defence to them, by being turned upon their adversaries. The cup of trembling should be taken out of their hand, and put into the hand of those that afflicted them, **#Isa 51:22,23**.

(7.) That he would give them his grace to change their hearts, and *rule there* (**#De 30:6**): *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord*. Note,

[1.] The heart must be circumcised to love God. The filth of the flesh must be put away; and the foolishness of the heart, as the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it. See **#Col 2:11,12** **Ro 2:29**. Circumcision was a seal of the covenant; the heart is then *circumcised to love God* when it is strongly engaged and held by that bond to this duty.

[2.] It is the work of God's grace to circumcise the heart, and to shed abroad the love of God there; and this grace is given to all that repent and seek it carefully. Nay, that seems to be rather a promise than a precept (**#De 30:8**): *Thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord*. He that requires us to return promises grace to enable us to return: and it is our fault if that grace be not effectual. Herein the covenant of grace is well ordered, that whatsoever is required in the covenant is promised. *Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit*, **#Pr 1:23**.

3. It is observable how Moses here calls God *the Lord thy God* twelve times in these ten verses, intimating,

(1.) That penitents may take direction and encouragement in their return to God from their relation to him. **#Jer 3:22**,

"Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God; therefore to thee we are bound to come, whither else should we go? And therefore we hope to find favour with thee."

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

II. This may also be considered as a prediction of the repentance and restoration of the Jews: *When all these things shall have come upon thee* (**#De 30:1**), the blessing first, and after that the curse, then the mercy in reserve shall take place. Though their hearts were wretchedly hardened, yet the grace of God could soften and change them; and then, though their case was deplorably miserable, the providence of God would redress all their grievances. Now,

1. It is certain that this was fulfilled in their return from their captivity in Babylon. It was a wonderful instance of their repentance and reformation that Ephraim, who had been joined to idols, renounced them, and said, *What have I to do any more with idols?*

That captivity effectually cured them of idolatry; and then God planted them again in their own land and did them good. But,

2. Some think that it is yet further to be accomplished in the conversion of the Jews who are now dispersed, their repentance for the sin of their fathers in crucifying Christ, their return to God through him, and their accession to the Christian church. But, *alas! who shall live when God doth this?*

Ver. 11. thru 14.

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

I. This is true of the law of Moses. They could never plead in excuse of their disobedience that God had enjoined them that which was either unintelligible or impracticable, impossible to be known or to be done (#De 30:11): It is not hidden from thee. That is,

1. "It is not too high for thee; thou needest not send messengers to heaven (#De 30:12), to enquire what thou must do to please God; nor needest thou go *beyond sea* (#De 30:13), as the philosophers did, that travelled through many and distant regions in pursuit of learning; no, thou art not put to that labour and expense; nor is the commandment within the reach of those only that have a great estate or a refined genius, but it is *very nigh unto thee*, #De 30:14. It is written in thy books, made plain upon tables, so that he that runs may read it; thy priests' lips keep this knowledge, and, when any difficulty arises, thou mayest *ask the law at their mouth*, #Mal 2:7. It is not communicated in a strange language; but it is in thy mouth, that is, in the vulgar tongue that is commonly used by thee, in which thou mayest hear it read, and talk of it familiarly among thy children. It is not wrapped up in obscure phrases or figures to puzzle and amuse thee, or in hieroglyphics, but it is in thy heart; it is delivered in such a manner as that it is level to thy capacity, even to the capacity of the meanest."

2. "It is not too *hard* nor *heavy* for thee:"

so the Septuagint reads it, #De 30:11. Thou needest not say,

"As good attempt to climb to heaven, or flee upon the wings of the morning to the uttermost part of the sea, as go about to do all the words of this law:"

no, the matter is not so; it is no such intolerable yoke as some ill- minded people represent it. It was indeed a heavy yoke in comparison with that of Christ (#Ac 15:10), but not in comparison with the idolatrous services of the neighbouring nations. God appeals to themselves that he had not *made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense*, #Isa 43:23; Mic 6:3. But he speaks especially of the moral law, and its precepts:

"That is very nigh thee, consonant to the law of nature, which would have been found in every man's heart, and every man's mouth, if he would but have attended to it. There is that in thee which *consents to the law that it is good*, #Ro 7:16. Thou hast therefore no reason to complain of any insuperable difficulty in the observance of it."

II. This is true of the gospel of Christ, to which the apostle applies it, and makes it the language of the *righteousness which is of faith*, #Ro 10:6-8. And many think this is

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

Ver. 15. thru Ver. 20.

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

I. He states the case very fairly. He appeals to themselves concerning it whether he had not laid the matter as plainly as they could wish before them.

1. Every man covets to obtain life and good, and to escape death and evil, desires happiness and dreads misery.

"Well," says he, "I have shown you the way to obtain all the happiness you can desire and to avoid all misery. Be obedient, and all shall be well, and nothing amiss."

Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, in hopes of getting thereby the knowledge of good and evil; but it was a miserable knowledge they got, of good by the loss of it, and of evil by the sense of it; yet such is the compassion of God towards man that, instead of giving him to his own delusion, he has favoured him by his word with such a knowledge of good and evil as will make him for ever happy if it be not his own fault.

2. Every man is moved and governed in his actions by hope and fear, hope of good and fear of evil, real of apparent.

"Now," says Moses, "I have tried both ways; if you will be either drawn to obedience by the certain prospect of advantage by it, or driven to obedience by the no less certain prospect of ruin in case you be disobedient--if you will be wrought upon either way, you will be kept close to God and your duty; but, if you will not, you are utterly inexcusable."

Let us, then, hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

(1.) If they and theirs would love God and serve him, they should live and be happy, #De 30:16. If they would love God, and evidence the sincerity of their love by keeping his commandments--if they would make conscience of keeping his commandments, and do it from a principle of love--then God would do them good, and they should be as happy as his love and blessing could make them.

(2.) If they or theirs should at any time turn from God, desert his service, and worship

other gods this would certainly be their ruin, **#De 30:17,18**. Observe, It is not for every failure in the particulars of their duty that ruin is threatened, but for apostasy and idolatry: though every violation of the command deserved the curse, yet the nation would be destroyed by that only which is the violation of the marriage covenant. The purport of the New Testament is much the same; this, in like manner, sets before us life and death, good and evil; *He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned*, **#Mr 16:16**. And this faith includes love and obedience. *To those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life. But to those that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness* (and so, in effect, worship other gods and serve them), will be rendered the indignation and wrath of an immortal God, the consequence of which must needs be the tribulation and anguish of an immortal soul, **#Ro 2:7-9**.

II. Having thus stated the case, he fairly puts them to their choice, with a direction to them to choose well. He appeals to heaven and earth concerning his fair and faithful dealing with them, **#De 30:19**. They could not but own that whatever was the issue he had delivered his soul; therefore, that they might deliver theirs, he bids them choose life, that is, choose to do their duty, which would be their life. Note,

1. Those shall have life that choose it: those that choose the favour of God and communion with him for their felicity, and prosecute their choice as they ought, shall have what they choose.
2. Those that come short of life and happiness must thank themselves; they would have had it if they had chosen it when it was put to their choice: but they die because they *will* die; that is, because they do not like the life promised upon the terms proposed.

III. In the last verse,

1. He shows them, in short, what their duty is, *to love God*, and to love him as *the Lord*, a Being most amiable, and as *their God*, a God in covenant with them; and, as an evidence of this love, to *obey his voice* in every thing, and by a constancy in this love and obedience to *cleave to him*, and never to forsake him in affection or practice.

2. He shows them what reason there was for this duty, in consideration,

(1.) Of their dependence upon God: *He is thy life, and the length of thy days*. He gives life, preserves life, restores life, and prolongs it by his power though it is a frail life, and by his patience though it is a forfeited life: he sweetens life with his comforts, and is the sovereign Lord of life; *in his hand our breath is*. Therefore we are concerned to keep ourselves in his love; for it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy.

(2.) Of their obligation to him for the promise of Canaan made to their fathers and ratified with an oath. And,

- (3.) Of their expectations from him in performance of that promise:

"Love God, and serve him, that thou mayest dwell in that land of promise which thou mayest be sure he can give, and uphold to thee who is *thy life and the length of thy days*."

All these are arguments to us to continue in love and obedience to the God of our mercies.

