

## NOTES ON THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

By C. H. M.

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### CHAPTER EIGHT

**“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 swore unto your fathers. 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”** (Ver. 1,2)

It is at once refreshing, edifying, and encouraging to look back over the whole course along which the faithful hand of our God has conducted us; to trace His wise and gracious dealings with us; to call to mind His many marvelous interpositions on our behalf; how He delivered us out of this strait and that difficulty; how, oftentimes, when we were at our wits' end, He appeared for our help, and opened the way before us, rebuking our fears and filling our hearts with songs of praise and thanksgiving.

We must not, by any means, confound this delightful exercise with the miserable habit of looking back at our ways, our attainments, our progress, our service, what we have been able to do, even though we are ready to admit, in a general way, that it was only by the grace of God that we were enabled to do any little work for Him.

All this only ministers to self-complacency, which is destructive of all true spirituality of mind. Self-retrospection, if we may be allowed to use such a term, is quite as injurious in its moral effect as self-introspection. In short, self-occupation, in any of its multiplied phases, is most pernicious; it is, in so far as it is allowed to operate, the death-blow to fellowship. Anything that tends to bring self before the mind must be judged and refused, with stern decision; it brings in barrenness, darkness, and feebleness.

For a person to sit down to look back at his attainments or his doings, is about as wretched an occupation as anyone could engage in. We may be sure it was not to any such thing as this that Moses exhorted the people when he charged them to **“remember all the way by which the Lord their God had led them.”**

We may here recur, for a moment, to the memorable words of the apostle in Philippians 3. **“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Now, the question is, what were the **“things”** of which the blessed apostle speaks?

Did he forget the precious dealings of God with his soul throughout the whole of his wilderness journey? Impossible! – indeed we have the very fullest and clearest evidence to the contrary.

Hear his touching words before Agrippa – **“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great.”** So also, in writing to his beloved son and fellow-laborer, Timothy, he reviews the past, and speaks of the persecutions and afflictions which he had endured; **“but,”** he adds, **“out of them all the Lord delivered me.”** And again, **“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”**

To what then does the apostle refer when he speaks of **“forgetting those things which are behind”**?

We believe he refers to all those things which had no connection with Christ – things in which the heart might rest, and nature might glory – things which might act as weights and hindrances, all these were to be forgotten in the ardent pursuit of those grand and glorious realities which lay before him. We do not believe that Paul, or any other child of God or servant of Christ, could ever desire to forget a single scene or circumstance in his whole earthly career in any way illustrative of the goodness, the loving-kindness, the tender mercy, the faithfulness of God.

On the contrary, we believe it will ever be one of our very sweetest exercises to dwell upon the blessed memory of all our Father’s ways with us while passing across the desert, home to our everlasting rest.

“There with what joy reviewing  
Past conflicts, dangers, fears,  
Thy hand our foes subduing,  
And drying all our tears.

Our hearts with rapture burning,  
The path we shall retrace,  
Where now our souls are learning  
The riches of Thy grace.”

But let us not be misunderstood. We do not, by any means, wish to give countenance to the habit of dwelling merely upon our own experience. This is often very poor work, and resolves itself into self-occupation. We have to guard against this as one of the many things which tend to lower our spiritual tone and draw our hearts away from Christ.

But we need never be afraid of the result of dwelling upon the record of the Lord’s dealings and ways with us. This is a blessed habit, tending ever to lift us out of ourselves, and fill us with praise and thanksgiving.

Why, we may ask, were Israel charged to **“remember all the way”** by which the Lord their God

had led them? Assuredly, to draw out their hearts in praise for the past, and to strengthen their confidence in God for the future. Thus it must ever be.

“We’ll praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that’s to come.”

May we do so more and more. May we just move on, day by day, praising and trusting, trusting and praising.

These are the two things which redound to the glory of God, and to our peace and joy in Him. When the eye rests on the “**Ebenezers**” which lie all along the way, the heart must give forth its sweet “**hallelujahs**” to Him who has helped us hitherto, and will help us right on to the end. He hath delivered, and He doth deliver, and He will deliver. Blessed chain! Its every link is divine deliverance.

Nor is it merely upon the signal mercies and gracious deliverances of our Father’s hand that we are to dwell, with devout thankfulness, but also upon the “**humblings**” and the “**provings**” of His wise, faithful, and holy love.

All these things are full of richest blessing to our souls. They are not, as people sometimes call them, “mercies in disguise,” but plain, palpable, unmistakable mercies, for which we shall have to praise our God throughout the golden ages of that bright eternity which lies before us.

“**Thou shalt remember all the way**” – every stage of the journey, every scene of wilderness-life, all the dealings of God, from first to last, with the special object thereof, “**to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.**”

How wonderful to think of God’s patient grace and painstaking love with His people in the wilderness!

What precious instruction for us! With what intense interest and spiritual delight we can hang over the record of the divine dealings with Israel in all their desert-wanderings! How much we can learn from the marvelous history!

We, too, have to be humbled and proved, and made to know what is in our hearts. It is very profitable and morally wholesome.

On our first setting out to follow the Lord,  
we know but little of the depths of evil and folly in our hearts.

Indeed, we are superficial in everything. It is as we get on in our practical career that we begin to prove the reality of things; we find out the depths of evil in ourselves, the utter hollowness and worthlessness of all that is in the world, and the urgent need of the most complete dependence upon the grace of God every moment.

All this is very good; it makes us humble and self-distrusting; it delivers us from pride and self-

sufficiency, and leads us to cling, in childlike simplicity, to the One who alone is able to keep us from falling.

Thus, as we grow in self-knowledge,

- We get a deeper sense of grace,
- A more profound acquaintance with the wondrous love of the heart of God,
- His tenderness toward us,
- His marvelous patience in bearing with all our infirmities and failings,
- His rich mercy in having taken us up at all,
- His loving ministry to all our varied need,
- His numberless interpositions on our behalf.

The exercises through which He has seen fit to lead us for our souls' deep and permanent profit.

The practical effect of all this is invaluable;

- It imparts depth, solidity, and mellowness to the character;
- It cures us of all our crude notions and vain theories;
- It delivers us from one-sidedness and wild extremes;
- It makes us tender, thoughtful, patient, and considerate toward others;
- It corrects our harsh judgments and gives a gracious desire to put the best possible construction upon the actions of others, and
- It gives a readiness to attribute the best motives in cases which may seem to us equivocal.

These are precious fruits of wilderness-experience which we may all earnestly covet.

**“And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live”** (Ver. 3).

This passage derives special interest and importance from the fact that it is the first of our Lord's quotations from the book of Deuteronomy in His conflict with the adversary in the wilderness.

Let us ponder this deeply; it demands our earnest attention.

Why did our Lord quote from Deuteronomy? Because that was the book which, above all others, specially applied to the condition of Israel at the moment. Israel had utterly failed, and this weighty fact is assumed in the book of Deuteronomy from beginning to end. But notwithstanding the failure of the nation, the path of obedience lay open to every faithful Israelite. It was the privilege and duty of everyone who loved God to abide by His Word under all circumstances and in all places.

Now, our blessed Lord was divinely true to the position of the Israel of God.

Israel after the flesh had failed and forfeited everything; He was there, in the wilderness, as the true Israel of God, to meet the enemy by the simple authority of the Word of God. **“And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing; and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the devil said unto Him, ‘If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.’ And Jesus answered Him, saying, ‘It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’ “** (Luke 4).

Here, then, is something for us to ponder.

The perfect Man, the true Israel, in the wilderness, surrounded by the wild beasts, fasting for forty days, in the presence of the great adversary of God, of man, of Israel. There was not a single feature in the scene to speak for God. It was not with the second Man as it was with the first; He was not surrounded with all the delights of Eden, but with all the dreariness and desolation of a desert – there in loneliness and hunger, but there for God!

Yes, blessed be His name, and there for man, there to show man how to meet the enemy in all his varied temptations, there to show man how to live.

We must not suppose for a moment that our adorable Lord met the adversary as God over all. True, He was God, but if it were only as such that He stood in the conflict, it could not afford any example for us. Besides, it would be needless to tell us that God was able to vanquish and put to flight a creature which His own hand had formed.

But to see One who was, in every respect, a man, and in all – the circumstances of humanity, sin excepted,- to see Him there in weakness, in hunger, standing amid the consequences of man’s fall, and to find Him triumphing completely over the terrible foe, it is this which is so full of comfort, consolation, strength, and encouragement for us.

And how did He triumph?

This is the grand and all-important question for us, – a question demanding the most profound attention of every member of the Church of God – a question the magnitude and importance of which it would be utterly impossible to overstate. How, then, did the Man Christ Jesus vanquish Satan in the wilderness? Simply by the Word of God. He overcame, not as the almighty God, but as the humble, dependent, self-emptied, and obedient Man.

We have before us the magnificent spectacle of a Man standing in the presence of the devil and utterly confounding him with no other weapon whatsoever save the Word of God. It was not by the display of divine power, for that could be no model for us; it was simply with the Word of God, in His heart and in His mouth, that the Second Man confounded the terrible enemy of God and man.

And let us carefully note that our blessed Lord does not reason with Satan.

He does not appeal to any facts connected with Himself – facts with which the enemy was well acquainted. He does not say, I know I am the Son of God; the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the Father’s voice, have all borne witness to the fact of My being the Son of God. No; this would not do; it would not and could not be an example for us.

The one special point for us to seize and learn from is, that our great Exemplar, when meeting all the temptations of the enemy, used only the weapon which we have in our possession, namely, the simple, precious, written, Word of God. We say, “All the temptations,” because in all the three instances our Lord’s unvarying reply is, “**It is written.**”

He does not say, “I know” – “I think” “I feel” – “I believe” this, that, or the other; He simply appeals to the written Word of God – the book of Deuteronomy in particular, – that very book which infidels have dared to insult, but which is pre-eminently the book for every obedient man, in the face of total, universal, hopeless, wreck and ruin.

This is of unspeakable moment for us, beloved reader. It is as though our Lord Christ had said to the adversary, Whether I am the Son of God or not is not now the question, but how man is to live, and the answer to this question is only to be found in Holy Scripture; and it is to be found there as clear as a sunbeam, quite irrespective of all questions respecting Me. Whoever I am, the Scripture is the same:

**“Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.”**

Here we have the only true, the only safe, the only happy attitude for man, namely, hanging in earnest dependence upon “**every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.**”

Blessed attitude! We may well say there is nothing like it in all this world.

- It brings the soul into direct, living, personal contact with the Lord Himself, by means of His Word.
- It makes the Word so absolutely essential to us, in every thing; we cannot do without it.

As the natural life is sustained by bread, so the spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God.

It is not merely going to the Bible to find doctrines there, or to have our opinions or views confirmed; it is very much more than this; it is going to the Bible for the staple commodity of life – the life of the new man; it is going there for food, for light, for guidance, for comfort, for authority, for strength – for all, in short, that the soul can possibly need, from first to last.

And let us specially note the force and value of the expression, “**every word.**”

How fully it shows that we cannot afford to dispense with a single word that has proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord. We want it all. We cannot tell the moment in which some exigence may present itself for which Scripture has already provided.

We may not perhaps have specially noticed the Scripture before; but when the difficulty arises, if we are in a right condition of soul – the true posture of heart, the Spirit of God will furnish us with the needed Scripture, and we shall see a force, beauty, depth, and moral adaptation in the passage which we had never seen before.

Scripture is a divine and therefore exhaustless treasury, in which God has made ample provision for all the need of His people, and for each believer in particular, right on to the end. Hence we should study it all, ponder it, dig deeply into it, and have it treasured up in our hearts, ready for use when the demand arises.

There is not a single crisis occurring in the entire history of the Church of God, not a single difficulty in the entire path of any individual believer, from beginning to end, which has not been perfectly provided for in the Bible.

We have all we want in that blessed volume, and hence we should be ever seeking to make ourselves more and more acquainted with what that volume contains, so as to be **“thoroughly furnished”** for whatever may arise, whether it be a temptation of the devil, an allurements of the world, or a lust of the flesh; or, on the other hand, for equipment for that path of good works which God has afore prepared that we should walk in it.

And we should, further, give special attention to the expression,  
**“Out of the mouth of the Lord.”**

This is unspeakably precious. It brings the Lord so very near to us, and gives us such a sense of the reality of feeding upon His every word – yea, of hanging upon it as something absolutely essential and indispensable. It sets forth the blessed fact that our souls can no more exist without the Word than our bodies could without food.

In a word, we are taught by this passage that man’s true position, his proper attitude, his only place of strength, safety, rest, and blessing, is to be found in habitual dependence upon the Word of God.

This is the life of faith which we are called to live – the life of dependence – the life of obedience – the life that Jesus lived perfectly.

That blessed One would not move a step, utter a word, or do a single thing save by the authority of the Word of God.

No doubt He could have turned stone into bread, but He had no command from God to do that; and inasmuch as He had no command, He had no motive for action. Hence Satan’s temptations were perfectly powerless. He could do nothing with a man who would only act on the authority of the Word of God.

And we may also note, with very much interest and profit, that our blessed Lord does not quote Scripture for the purpose of silencing the adversary, but simply as authority for His position and conduct.

Here is where we are so apt to fail; we do not sufficiently use the precious Word of God in this way; we quote it, at times, more for victory over the enemy than for power and authority for our own souls. Thus it loses its power in our hearts.

We want to use the Word as a hungry man uses bread, or as a mariner uses his chart and his compass; it is that on which we live, and by which we move and act and think and speak. Such it really is, and the more fully we prove it to be all this to us, the more we shall know of its infinite preciousness.

- Who is it that knows most of the real value of bread? Is it a chemist? No; but a hungry man. A chemist may analyze it, and discuss its component parts, but a hungry man proves its worth.
- Who knows most of the real value of a chart? Is it the teacher of navigation? No; but the mariner as he sails along an unknown and dangerous coast.

These are but feeble figures to illustrate what the Word of God is to the true Christian. He cannot do without it. It is absolutely indispensable, in every relationship of life and in every sphere of action. His hidden life is fed and sustained by it; his practical life is guided by it.

In all the scenes and circumstances of his personal and domestic history, in the privacy of his closet, in the bosom of his family, in the management of his affairs, he is cast upon the Word of God for guidance and counsel. And it never fails those who simply cleave to it and confide in it.

We may trust Scripture without a single shade of misgiving. Go to it when we will, we shall always find what we want.

- Are we in sorrow? is the poor heart bereaved, crushed, and desolate? What can soothe and comfort us like the balmy words which the HOLY SPIRIT has penned for us? One sentence of Holy Scripture can do more, in the way of comfort and consolation, than all the letters of condolence that ever were penned by human hand.
- Are we discouraged, faint-hearted, and cast down? The Word of God meets us with its bright and soul-stirring assurances.
- Are we pressed by pinching poverty? The Holy Ghost brings home to our hearts some golden promise from the page of inspiration, recalling us to Him who is **“the Possessor of heaven and earth,”** and who, in His infinite grace, has pledged Himself to **“supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**
- Are we perplexed and harassed by the conflicting opinions of men, by the dogmas of conflicting schools of divinity, by religious and theological difficulties? A few sentences of Holy Scripture will pour in a flood of divine light upon the heart and conscience, and set us at perfect rest, answering every question, solving every difficulty, removing every doubt, chasing away every cloud, giving us to know the mind of God, putting an end to conflicting opinions by the one divinely competent authority.

What a boon, therefore, is Holy Scripture! What a precious treasure we possess in the Word of God!

How we should bless His holy name for having given it to us! Yes; and bless Him, too, for every thing that tends to make us more fully acquainted with the depth, fullness, and power of those words of our chapter, **“Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”**

Truly precious are these words to the heart of the believer! And hardly less so are those that follow, in which the beloved and revered lawgiver refers, with touching sweetness, to the Lord’s tender care throughout the whole of Israel’s desert-wanderings.

**“Thy raiment,”** he says, **“waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.”**

What marvelous grace shines out in these words!

Only think, reader, of the Lord looking after His people in such a manner, to see that their garments should not wax old or their foot swell!

He not only fed them, but clothed them and cared for them in every way. He even stooped to look after their feet, that the sand of the desert might not injure them.

Thus, for forty years, did He watch over them, with all the exquisite tenderness of a father’s heart.

What will not love undertake to do for its object? the Lord had set His love upon His people, and this one blessed fact secured everything for them, had they only understood it. There was not a single thing within the range of Israel’s necessities, from Egypt to Canaan, which was not secured to them and included in the fact that the Lord had undertaken to do for them. With infinite love and almighty power on their side, what could be lacking?

### The Chastening of the Lord

But then, as we know, love clothes itself in various forms. It has something more to do than to provide food and raiment for its objects. It has not only to take account of their physical but also of their moral and spiritual wants. Of this the lawgiver does not fail to remind the people.

**“Thou shalt also consider,”** he says, **“in thine heart”** – the only true and effective way to consider – **“that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”**

Now, we do not like chastening; it is not joyous, but grievous.

It is all very well for a son to receive food and raiment from a father’s hand, and to have all his comforts provided by a father’s thoughtful love, but he does not like to see him taking down the rod. And yet that dreaded rod may be the very best thing for the son; it may do for him what no material benefits or earthly blessings could effect, it may correct some bad habit, or deliver him from some wrong tendency, or save him from some evil influence, and thus prove a great moral and spiritual blessing for which he shall have to be forever thankful.

The grand point for the son is, to see a father's love and care in the discipline and chastening just as distinctly as in the various material benefits which strew his path from day to day.

Here is precisely where we so signally fail in reference to the disciplinary dealings of our Father.

- We rejoice in His benefits and blessings;
- We are filled with praise and thankfulness as we receive day by day, from His liberal hand, the rich supply of all our need;
- We delight to dwell upon His marvelous interposition on our behalf in times of pressure and difficulty;
- It is a most precious exercise to look back over the path by which His good hand has led us, and
- It is good to mark those "**Ebenezers**" which tell of gracious help supplied all along the road.

All this is very good and very right and very precious, but then there is a great danger of our resting in the mercies, the blessings, and the benefits which flow, in such rich profusion, from our Father's loving heart and liberal hand.

We are apt to rest in these things, and say with the Psalmist, "**In my prosperity I said, 'I shall never be moved. Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.'**"

True, it is "**by Thy favor,**" but yet we are prone to be occupied with our mountain and our prosperity; we allow these things to come in between our hearts and the Lord, and thus they become a snare to us, hence the need of chastening.

Our Father, in His faithful love and care, is watching over us; He sees the danger and He sends trial, in one shape or another. Perhaps a telegram comes announcing the death of a beloved child, or the crash of a bank involving the loss of our earthly all; or, it may be, we are laid on a bed of pain and sickness, or called to watch by the sick bed of a beloved relative. In a word, we are called to wade through deep waters which seem, to our poor, feeble, coward hearts, absolutely overwhelming.

The enemy suggests the question, Is this love? Faith replies, without hesitation and without reserve, Yes; it is all love – perfect love; the death of the child, the loss of the property, the long, heavy, painful illness, all the sorrow, all the pressure, all the exercise, the deep waters and dark shadows – all, all is love – perfect love and unerring wisdom.

I feel assured of it, even now; I do not wait to know it by and by, when I shall look back on the path from amid the full light of the glory; I know it now, and delight to own it to the praise of that infinite grace which has taken me up from the depth of my ruin, and charged itself with all that concerns me, and which deigns to occupy itself with my very failures, follies, and sins, in order to deliver me from them, and to make me a partaker of divine holiness, and conform me to the image of that blessed One who "**loved Me and gave Himself for me.**"

Christian reader, this is the way to answer Satan, and to hush the dark reasonings which may spring up in our hearts.

We must always justify God.

We must look at all His disciplinary dealings in the light of His love. **“Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”**

Most surely we should not like to be without the blessed pledge and proof of sonship.

**“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. ‘ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed”** (Hebrews 12:5-13).

It is at once interesting and profitable to mark the way in which Moses presses upon the congregation the varied motives of obedience arising from the past, the present, and the future.

Everything is brought to bear upon them to quicken and deepen their sense of the Lord’s claims upon them.

- They were to **“remember”** the past,
- They were to **“consider”** the present, and
- They were to anticipate the future.

And all this was to act on their hearts, and lead them forth in holy obedience to that blessed and gracious One who had done, who was doing, and who would do such great things for them.

The thoughtful reader can hardly fail to observe in this constant presentation of moral motives a marked feature of this lovely book of Deuteronomy, and a striking proof that it is no mere attempt at a repetition of what we have in Exodus; but, on the contrary, that our book has a province, a range, a scope, and design entirely its own. To speak of mere repetition is absurd; to speak of contradiction is impious.

**“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear him.”**

The word **“therefore”** had a retrospective and prospective force. It was designed to lead the heart back over the past dealings of the Lord, and forward into the future.

They were to think of the marvelous history of those forty years in the desert,

- The teaching,
- The humbling,
- The proving,
- The watchful care,
- The gracious ministry,
- The full supply of all their need,
- The manna from Heaven,
- The stream from the smitten rock,
- The care of their garments, and of their very feet,
- The wholesome discipline for their moral good.

What powerful moral motives were here for Israel's obedience!

But this was not all: they were to look forward into the future; they were to anticipate the bright prospect which lay before them; they were to find in the future, as well as in the past and the present, the solid basis of the Lord's claims upon their reverent and whole-hearted obedience.

**“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; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.”**

How fair was the prospect! How bright the vision!

How marked the contrast to the Egypt behind them and the wilderness through which they had passed!

The Lord's land lay before them in all its beauty and verdure, its vine-clad hills and honeyed plains, its gushing fountains and flowing streams. How refreshing the thought of the vine, the fig-tree, the pomegranate, and the olive! How different from the leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt! Yes, all so different! It was the Lord's own land: this was enough. It produced and contained all they could possibly want. Above its surface, rich profusion; below, untold wealth – exhaustless treasure.

What a prospect! How the faithful Israelite would long to enter upon it! – long to exchange the sand of the desert for that bright inheritance! True, the desert had its deep and blessed experiences, its holy lessons, its precious memories; there they had known the Lord in a way they could not know Him even in Canaan; – all this was quite true, and we can fully understand it; but still the wilderness was not Canaan, and every true Israelite would long to set his foot on the land of promise, and truly we may say that Moses presents the land, in the passage just quoted, in a way eminently calculated to attract the heart.

“A land,” he says, “**wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it.**” What more could be said? Here was the grand fact in reference to that good land into which the hand of covenant-love was about to introduce them. All their wants would be divinely met. Hunger and thirst should never be known there. Health and plenty, joy and gladness, peace and blessing, were to be the assured portion of the Israel of God in that fair inheritance upon which they were about to enter. Every enemy was to be subdued; every obstacle swept away; “**the pleasant land**” was to pour forth its treasures for their use; watered continually by heaven’s rain, and warmed by its sunlight, it was to bring forth, in rich abundance, all that the heart could desire.

What a land! What an inheritance! What a home!

Of course, we are looking at it now from a divine stand-point – Looking at it according to what it was in the mind of God, and what it shall most assuredly be to Israel during that bright millennial age which lies before them.

We should have but a very poor idea indeed of the Lord’s land were we to think of it merely as possessed by Israel in the past, even in the very brightest days of its history, as it appeared amid the splendors of Solomon’s reign. We must look onward to “**the times of the restitution of all things,**” in order to have anything like a true idea of what the land of Canaan will yet be to the Israel of God.

Now, Moses speaks of the land according to the divine idea of it.

He presents it as given by God, and not as possessed by Israel. This makes all the difference. According to his charming description, there was neither enemy nor evil occurrent: nothing but fruitfulness and blessing from end to end. That is what it would have been, that is what it should have been, and that is what it shall be, by and by, to the seed of Abraham, in pursuance of the covenant made with their fathers – the new, the everlasting covenant, founded on the sovereign grace of God, and ratified by the blood of the Cross. No power of earth or hell can hinder the purpose or the promise of God. “**Hath He said, and shall He not do it?**”

God will make good, to the letter, every word, spite of all the enemy’s opposition and the lamentable failure of His people.

Though Abraham’s seed have utterly failed under law and under government, yet Abraham’s God will give grace and glory, for His gifts and calling are without repentance.

Moses fully understood all this. He knew how it would turn out with those who stood before him, and with their children after them, for many generations; and he looked forward into that bright future in which a covenant-God would display, in the view of all created intelligences, the triumphs of His grace in His dealings with the seed of Abraham His friend.

Meanwhile, however, the faithful servant of the Lord, true to the object before his mind, in all those marvelous discourses in the opening of our book, proceeds to unfold to the congregation the truth as to their mode of acting in the good land on which they were about to plant their foot.

As he had spoken of the past and of the present, so would he make use of the future; he would turn all to account in his holy effort to urge upon the people their obvious, bounden duty to that blessed One who had so graciously and tenderly cared for them all their journey through, and who was about to bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. Let us hearken to his touching and powerful exhortations.

**“When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He has given thee.”**

How simple! How lovely! How morally suitable!

Filled with the fruit of the Lord’s goodness, they were to bless and praise His holy name. He delights to surround Himself with hearts filled to overflowing with the sweet sense of His goodness, and pouring forth songs of praise and thanksgiving. He inhabits the praises of His people. He says, **“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.”**

The feeblest note of praise from a grateful heart ascends as fragrant incense to the throne and to the heart of God.

Let us remember this, beloved reader. It is as true for us,  
most surely, as it was for Israel, that praise is comely.

Our grand primary business is to praise the Lord. Our every breath should be a hallelujah. It is to this blessed and most sacred exercise the Holy Ghost exhorts us, in manifold places. **“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”**

We should ever remember that nothing so gratifies the heart and glorifies the name of our God as a thankful, worshiping spirit on the part of His people. It is well to do good and communicate, - God is well pleased with such sacrifices; it is our high privilege, while we have opportunity, **“to do good unto all men, and especially unto them who are of the household of faith;”** we are called to be channels of blessing between the loving heart of our Father and every form of human need that comes before us in our daily path; - all this is most blessedly true, but we must never forget that the very highest place is assigned to praise.

It is this which shall employ our ransomed powers throughout the golden ages of eternity, when the sacrifices of active benevolence shall no longer be needed. But the faithful lawgiver knew but too well the sad proneness of the human heart to forget all this to lose sight of the gracious Giver, and rest in His gifts; hence he addresses the following admonitory words to the congregation - wholesome words, truly, for them and for us. May we bend our ears and our hearts to them, in holy reverence and teachableness of spirit.

**“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.**

**“Lest when thou hast eaten and are 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, and 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 fiery 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, 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, because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God” (Ver. 11-20).**

Here is something for us to ponder deeply. It has most assuredly a voice for us, as it had for Israel.

We may perhaps feel disposed to marvel at the frequent reiteration of the note of warning and admonition, the constant appeals to the heart and conscience of the people as to their bounden duty to obey in all things the Word of God, the recurrence again and again to those grand soul-stirring facts connected with their deliverance out of Egypt and their journey through the wilderness.

But wherefore should we marvel?

In the first place,

- Do we not deeply feel and fully admit our own urgent need of warning, admonition, and exhortation?
- Do we not need line upon line, precept upon precept, and that continually?
- Are we not prone to forget the Lord our God – to rest in His gifts instead of Himself?

Alas! Alas! We cannot deny it.

We rest in the stream, instead of getting up to the Fountain; we turn the very mercies, blessings, and benefits which strew our path in rich profusion into an occasion of self-complacency and gratulation, instead of finding in them the blessed ground of continual praise and thanksgiving.

And then, as to those great facts of which Moses so continually reminds the people, could they ever lose their moral weight, power, or preciousness?

Surely not. Israel might forget and fail to appreciate those facts, but the facts remained the same.

- The terrible plagues of Egypt,
- The night of the passover,
- Their deliverance from the land of darkness, bondage, and degradation,
- Their marvelous passage through the Red Sea,
- The descent of that mysterious food from Heaven morning by morning,
- The refreshing stream gushing forth from the flinty rock.

How could such facts as these ever lose their power over a heart possessing a spark of genuine love to God? and why should we wonder to find Moses again and again appealing to them and using them as a most powerful lever wherewith to move the hearts of the people?

Moses felt the mighty moral influence of these things himself, and he would fain lead others to feel it also.

To him, they were precious beyond expression, and he longed to make his brethren feel their preciousness as well as himself. It was his one object to set before them, in every possible way, the powerful claims of the Lord upon their hearty and unreserved obedience. This, reader, will account for what might, to an unspiritual, unintelligent, cursory reader, seem the too frequent recurrence to the scenes of the past in those wonderful discourses of Moses.

We are reminded, as we read them, of the lovely words of Peter, in his second Epistle:

**“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance”** (Chap. 1:12-15).

How striking the unity of spirit and purpose in these two beloved and venerable servants of God!

Both the one and the other felt the tendency of the poor human heart to forget the things of God, of Heaven, and of eternity, and they felt the supreme importance and infinite value of the things of which they spoke; hence their earnest desire to keep them continually before the hearts and abidingly in the remembrance of the Lord’s beloved people.

Unbelieving, restless nature might say to Moses, or to Peter, Have you nothing new to tell us? Why are you perpetually dwelling on the same old themes? We know all you have got to say; we have heard it again and again. Why not strike out into some new field of thought? Would it not be well to try and keep abreast of the science of the day? If we keep perpetually moping over those antiquated themes, we shall be left stranded on the bank, while the stream of civilization rushes on. Pray give us something new.

Thus might the poor unbelieving mind – the worldly heart reason, but faith knows the answer to all such miserable suggestions.

We can well believe that both Moses and Peter would have made short work with all such reasonings. And so should we.

We know whence they emanate, whither they tend, and what they are worth; and we should have, if not on our lips, at least deep down in our hearts, a ready answer – an answer perfectly satisfactory to us, however contemptible it may seem to the men of this world.

Could a true Israelite ever tire of hearing of what the Lord had done for him, in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness? Never!

Such themes would be ever fresh, ever welcome to his heart.

And just so with the Christian.

- Can he ever tire of the Cross and all the grand and glorious realities that cluster around it?
- Can he ever tire of Christ, His peerless glories and unsearchable riches, His Person, His work, His offices? Never! No, never, throughout the bright ages of eternity.
- Does he crave any thing new?
- Can science improve upon Christ?
- Can human learning add aught to the great mystery of godliness, which has for its foundation God manifest in the flesh, and for its top-stone a Man glorified in Heaven?
- Can we ever get beyond this?

No, reader, we could not if we would, and we would not if we could.

And even were we, for a moment, to take a lower range, and look at the works of God in creation; do we ever tire of the sun? He is not new; he has been pouring his beams upon this world for well-nigh six thousand years, and yet those beams are as fresh and as welcome to-day as they were when first created.

Do we ever tire of the sea? It is not new; its tide has been ebbing and flowing for nearly six thousand years, but its waves are as fresh and as welcome on our shores as ever.

True, the sun is often too dazzling to man's feeble vision, and the sea often swallows up, in a moment, man's boasted works; but yet the sun and the sea never lose their power, their freshness, their charm.

- Do we ever tire of the dew-drops that fall in refreshing virtue upon our gardens and fields?
- Do we ever tire of the perfume that emanates from our hedge-rows?
- Do we ever tire of the notes of the nightingale and the thrush?

And what are all these when compared with the glories which cluster around the Person and the Cross of Christ? what are they when put in contrast with the grand realities of that eternity which is before us?

Reader, let us beware how we listen to such suggestions, whether they come from without or spring from the depths of our own evil hearts, lest we be found, like Israel after the flesh, loathing the heavenly Manna and despising the pleasant land; or like Demas, who forsook the blessed apostle, having loved this present age; or like those of whom we read in the sixth of John, who, offended by our Lord's close and pointed teaching, "**went back, and walked no more with Him.**"

May the Lord keep our hearts true to Himself, and fresh and fervent in His blessed cause, till He come.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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