

CHAPTER 32

In this chapter we have,

I. The song which Moses, by the appointment of God, delivered to the children of Israel, for a standing admonition to them, to take heed of forsaking God. This takes up most of the chapter, in which we have,

- 1.** The preface (v. 1, 2).
- 2.** A high character of God, and, in opposition to that, a bad character of the people of Israel (v. 3-6).
- 3.** A rehearsal of the great things God had done for them, and in opposition to that an account of their ill carriage towards him (v. 7-18).
- 4.** A prediction of the wasting destroying judgments which God would bring upon them for their sins, in which God is here justified by the many aggravations of their impieties (v. 19-33).
- 5.** A promise of the destruction of their enemies and oppressors at last, and the glorious deliverance of a remnant of Israel (v. 36-43).

II. The exhortation with which Moses delivered this song to them (v. 41-47).

III. The orders God gives to Moses to go up to Mount Nebo and die (v. 48, etc.).

DEUTERONOMY 32:1-6

THE SONG OF MOSES

Here is,

I. A commanding preface or introduction to this song of Moses, v. 1, 2. He begins,

1. With a solemn appeal to heaven and earth concerning the truth and importance of what he was about to say, and the justice of the divine proceedings against a rebellious and backsliding people, for he had said

(^{<513>}Deuteronomy 31:28) that he would in this song call heaven and earth to record against them. Heaven and earth would sooner hear than this perverse and unthinking people; for they revolt not from the obedience to their Creator, but *continue to this day, according to his ordinances, as his servants* (^{<138>}Psalms 119:89-91), and therefore will rise up in judgment against rebellious Israel. Heaven and earth will be witnesses against sinners, witnesses of the warning given them and of their refusal to take the warning (see ^{<107>}Job 20:27); *the heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him*. Or heaven and earth are here put for the inhabitants of both, angels and men; both shall agree to justify God in his proceedings against Israel, and to *declare his righteousness*, (^{<106>}Psalms 50:6; see ^{<101>}Revelation 19:1, 2.

2. he begins with a solemn application of what he was about to say to the people (v. 2): *My doctrine shall drop as the rain*. “It shall be a beating sweeping rain to the rebellious;” so one of the Chaldee paraphrasts expounds the first clause. Rain is sometimes sent for judgment, witness that with which the world was deluged; and so the word of God, while to some it is reviving and refreshing — *a savour of life unto life*, is to others terrifying and killing — *a savour of death unto death*. It shall be as a sweet and comfortable dew to those who are rightly prepared to receive it. Observe,

(1.) The subject of this song is doctrine; he had given them a song of praise and thanksgiving (Exodus 15), but this is a song of instruction, for in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, we are not only to give glory to god, but to *teach and admonish one another*, (^{<106>}Colossians 3:16. Hence many of David's psalms are entitled *Maschil* — *to give instruction*.

(2.) This doctrine is fitly compared to rain and showers which come from above, to make the earth fruitful, and *accomplish that for which they are sent*. (^{<250>}Isaiah 55:10, 11), and depend not upon the wisdom or will of man, (^{<301>}Micah 5:7. It is a mercy to have this rain come often upon us, and our duty to *drink it in*, (^{<301>}Hebrews 6:7.

(3.) He promises that his doctrine shall drop and distil as the dew, and the small rain, which descend silently and without noise. The word preached is likely to profit when it comes gently, and sweetly insinuates itself into the hearts and affections of the hearers.

(4.) He bespeaks their acceptance and entertainment of it, and that it might be as sweet, and pleasant, and welcome to them as rain to the *thirsty earth*, ^{<126>}Psalm 72:6. And the word of God is likely to do us good when it is thus acceptable.

(5.) The learned bishop Patrick understands it as a prayer that his words which were sent from heaven to them might sink into their hearts and soften them, as the rain softens the earth, and so make them fruitful in obedience.

II. An awful declaration of the greatness and righteousness of God, v. 3, 4.

1. He begins with this, and lays it down as his first principle,

(1.) To preserve the honour of God, that no reproach might be cast upon him for the sake of the wickedness of his people Israel; how wicked and corrupt soever those are who are called by his name, he is just, and right, and all that is good, and is not to be thought the worse of for their badness.

(2.) To aggravate the wickedness of Israel, who knew and worshipped such a holy god, and yet were themselves so unholy. And,

(3.) To justify God in his dealings with them; we must abide by it, that God is righteous, even when his *judgments are a great deep*, ^{<111>}Jeremiah 12:1; ^{<136>}Psalm 36:6.

2. Moses here sets himself to *publish the name of the Lord* (v. 3), that Israel, knowing what a God he is whom they had avouched for theirs, might never be such fools as to exchange him for a false god, a dunghill god. He calls upon them therefore to ascribe greatness to him. It will be of great use to us for the preventing of sin, and the preserving of us in the way of our duty, always to keep up high and honourable thoughts of God, and to take all occasions to express them: *Ascribe greatness to our God*. We cannot add to his greatness, for it is infinite; but we must acknowledge it, and give him the glory of it. Now, when Moses would set forth the greatness of God, he does it, not by explaining his eternity and immensity, or describing the brightness of his glory in the upper world, but by showing the faithfulness of his word, the perfection of his works, and the wisdom and equity of all the administrations of his government; for in these his glory shines most clearly to us, and these are the things revealed concerning him, which *belong to us and our children*, v. 4.

(1.) *He is the rock.* So he is called six times in this chapter, and the Septuagint all along translates it *theos*, *God*. The learned Mr. Hugh Broughton reckons that God is called the *rock* eighteen times (besides in this chapter) in the Old Testament (though in some places we translate it *strength*), and charges it therefore upon the papists that they make St. Peter a god when they make him the rock on which the church is built. God is the rock, for he is in himself immutable immovable, and he is to all that seek him and fly to him an impenetrable shelter, and to all that trust in him an everlasting foundation.

(2.) *His work is perfect.* His work of creation was so, *all very good*; his works of providence are so, or will be so in due time, and when the mystery of God shall be finished the perfection of his works will appear to all the world. Nothing that God does can be mended, ^{<2734>}Ecclesiastes 3:14. God was now perfecting what he had promised and begun for his people Israel, and from the perfection of this work they must take occasion to give him the glory of the perfection of all his works. The best of men's works are imperfect, they have their flaws and defects, and are left unfinished; but, *as for God, his work is perfect*; if he begin, he will make an end.

(3.) *All his ways are judgment.* The ends of his ways are all righteous, and he is wise in the choice of the means in order to those ends. *Judgment* signifies both *prudence* and *justice*. *The ways of the Lord are right*, ^{<344>}Hosea 14:9.

(4.) He is *a God of truth*, whose word we may take and rely upon, for he cannot lie who is faithful to all his promises, nor shall his threatenings fall to the ground.

(5.) He is *without iniquity*, one who never cheated any that trusted in him, never wronged any that appealed to his justice, nor ever was hard upon any that cast themselves upon his mercy.

(6.) *Just and right is he.* As he will not wrong any by punishing them more than they deserve, so he will not fail to recompense all those that serve him or suffer for him. He is indeed just and right; for he will effectually take care that none shall lose by him. Now what a bright and amiable idea does this one verse give us of the God whom we worship; and what reason have we then to love him and fear him, to live a life of delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him! This is *our rock*, and *there is no unrighteousness in him*; nor can there be, ^{<1925>}Psalms 92:15.

III. A high charge exhibited against the Israel of God, whose character was in all respects the reverse of that of the *God of Israel*, v. 5.

1. *They have corrupted themselves.* Or, *It has corrupted itself*; the body of the people has: *the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint.* God did not corrupt them, for *just and right is he*; but they are themselves the sole authors of their own sin and ruin; and both are included in this word. *They have debauched themselves*; for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. And *they have destroyed themselves*, ^{<3879>}Hosea 13:9. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear the guilt and grief, ^{<3892>}Proverbs 9:12.

2. *Their spot is not the spot of his children.* Even God's children have their spots, while they are in this imperfect state; for if we say we have no sin, no spot, we deceive ourselves. But the sin of Israel was none of those; it was not an infirmity which they strove against, watched and prayed against, but an evil which their hearts were fully set in them to do. For,

3. They were a *perverse and crooked generation*, that were actuated by a spirit of contradiction, and therefore would do what was forbidden because it was forbidden, would set up their own humour and fancy in opposition to the will of God, were impatient of reproof, hated to be reformed, and *went on frowardly in the way of their heart.* The Chaldee paraphrase reads this verse thus: *They have scattered or changed themselves, and not him, even the children that served idols, a generation that has depraved its own works, and alienated itself.* Idolaters cannot hurt God, nor do any damage to his works, nor make him a stranger to this world. See ^{<3886>}Job 35:6. No, all the hurt they do is to themselves and their own works. The learned bishop Patrick gives another reading of it: *Did he do him any hurt?* That is, “Is God the rock to be blamed for the evils that should befall Israel? No, *His children are their blot*,” that is, “All the evil that comes upon them is the fruit of their children's wickedness; for the whole generation of them is crooked and perverse.” All that are ruined ruin themselves; they die because they will die.

IV. A pathetic expostulation with this provoking people for their ingratitude (v. 6): “*Do you thus requite the Lord?* Surely you will not hereafter be so base and disingenuous in your carriage towards him as you have been.”

1. He reminds them of the obligations God had laid upon them to serve him, and to cleave to him. He had been a Father to them, had begotten

them, fed them, carried them, nursed them, and borne their manners; and would they spurn at the bowels of a Father? He had bought them, had been at a vast expense of miracles to bring them out of Egypt, had given *men for them, and people for their life*, ^{<3804>}Isaiah 43:4. “*Is not he thy Father, thy owner* (so some), that has an incontestable propriety in thee?” and *the ox knoweth his owner*. “he has made thee, and brought thee into being, established thee and kept thee in being; has he not done so? Can you deny the engagements you lie under to him, in consideration of the great things he has done and designed for you?” And are not our obligations, as baptized Christians, equally great and strong to our Creator that made us, our Redeemer that bought us, and our Sanctifier that has established us.

2. Hence he infers the evil of deserting him and rebelling against him. For,

(1.) It was base ingratitude: “*Do you thus require the Lord? Are these the returns you make him for all his favours to you? The powers you have from him will you employ them against him?*” See ^{<3805>}Micah 6:3, 4; ^{<3806>}John 10:32. This is such monstrous villainy as all the world will cry shame of: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse.

(2.) It was prodigious madness: *O foolish people and unwise! Fools, and double fools! who has bewitched you?* ^{<3807>}Galatians 3:1. “Fools indeed, to disoblige one on whom you have such a necessary dependence! To forsake your own mercies for lying vanities!” Note, All wilful sinners, especially sinners in Israel, are the most unwise and the most ungrateful people in the world.

^{<3808>}DEUTERONOMY 32:7-14

THE SONG OF MOSES

Moses, having in general represented God to them as their great benefactor, whom they were bound in gratitude to observe and obey, in these verses gives particular instances of God's kindness to them and concern for them.

1. Some instances were ancient, and for proof of them he appeals to the records (v. 7): *Remember the days of old*; that is, “Keep in remembrance the history of those days, and of the wonderful providences of God concerning the old world, and concerning your ancestors Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob; you will find a constant series of mercies attending them, and how long since things were working towards that which has now come to pass." Note, The authentic histories of ancient times are of singular use, and especially the history of the church in its infancy, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament church.

2. Others were more modern, and for proof of them he appeals to their fathers and elders that were now alive and with them. Parents must diligently teach their children, not only the word of God, his laws (^{<406>}Deuteronomy 6:7), and the meaning of his ordinances (^{<412>}Exodus 12:26, 27), but his works also, and the methods of his providence. See ^{<408>}Psalms 78:3, 4, 6, 7. And children should desire the knowledge of those things which will be of use to engage them to their duty and to direct them in it.

Three things are here enlarged upon as instances of God's kindness to his people Israel, and strong obligations upon them never to forsake him: —

I. The early designation of the land of Canaan for their inheritance; for herein it was a type and figure of our heavenly inheritance, that it was of old ordained and prepared in the divine counsels, v. 8. Observe,

1. When the earth was divided among the sons of men, in the days of Peleg, after the flood, and each family had its lot, in which it must settle, and by degrees grow up into a nation, then God had Israel in his thoughts and in his eye; for, designing this good land into which they were now going to be in due time an inheritance for them, he ordered that the posterity of Canaan, rather than any other of the families then in being, should be planted there in the mean time, to keep possession, as it were, till Israel was ready for it, because those families were under the curse of Noah, by which they were condemned to servitude and ruin (^{<402>}Genesis 9:25), and therefore would be the more justly, honourably, easily, and effectually, rooted out, when the fulness of time should come that Israel should take possession. Thus he set the bounds of that people with an eye to the designed number of the children of Israel, that they might have just as much as would serve their turn. And some observe that Canaan himself, and his eleven sons (^{<415>}Genesis 10:15, etc.), make up just the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. Note,

(1.) The wisdom of God has appointed the bounds of men's habitation, and determined both the place and time of our living in the world, ^{<417>}Acts

17:26. When he *gave the earth to the children of men* (^{<4516>}Psalm 115:16), it was not that every man might catch as he could; no, he divides to nations their inheritance, and will have every one to know his own, and not to invade another's property.

(2.) Infinite wisdom has a vast reach, and designs beforehand what is brought to pass long after. *Known unto God are all his works* from the beginning to the end (^{<4458>}Acts 15:18), but they are not so to us, ^{<2081>}Ecclesiastes 3:11.

(3.) The great God, in governing the world, and ordering the affairs of states and kingdoms, has a special regard to his church and people, and consults their good in all. See ^{<4469>}2 Chronicles 16:9, and ^{<2384>}Isaiah 45:4. The Canaanites thought they had as good and sure a title to their land as any of their neighbours had to theirs; but God intended that they should only be tenants, till the Israelites, their landlords, came. Thus God serves his own purposes of kindness to his people, by those that neither know him nor love him, *who mean not so, neither doth their heart think so*, ^{<2307>}Isaiah 10:7; ^{<3042>}Micah 4:12.

2. The reason given for the particular care God took for this people, so long before they were either born or thought of (as I may say), in our world, does yet more magnify the kindness, and make it obliging beyond expression (v. 9): *For the Lord's portion is his people*. All the world is his. He is owner and possessor of heaven and earth, but his church is his in a peculiar manner. It is his demesne, his vineyard, his garden enclosed. He has a particular delight in it: it is the beloved of his soul, in it he walks, he dwells, it is his rest for ever. He has a particular concern for it, keeps it as the apple of his eye. He has particular expectations from it, as a man has from his portion, has a much greater rent of honour, glory, and worship, from that distinguished remnant, than from all the world besides. That God should be his people's portion is easy to be accounted for, for he is their joy and felicity; but how they should be his portion, who neither needs them nor can be benefited by them, must be resolved into the wondrous condescensions of free grace. *Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes so to call and to account them*.

II. The forming of them into a people, that they might be fit to enter upon this inheritance, like an heir of age, at the time appointed of the Father. And herein also Canaan was a figure of the heavenly inheritance; for, as it

was from eternity proposed and designed for all God's spiritual Israel, so they are, in time (and it is a work of time), fitted and made meet for it, ^{<S12>}Colossians 1:12. The deliverance of Israel out of slavery, by the destruction of their oppressors, was attended with so many wonders obvious to sense, and had been so often spoken of, that it needed not to be mentioned in this song; but the gracious works God wrought upon them would be less taken notice of than the glorious works he had wrought for them, and therefore he chooses rather to advert to them. A great deal was done to model this people, to cast them into some shape, and to fit them for the great things designed for them in the land of promise; and it is here most elegantly described.

1. *He found him in a desert land*, v. 10. This refers, no doubt, to the wilderness through which God brought them to Canaan, and in which he took so much pains with them; it is called *the church in the wilderness*, ^{<HES>}Acts 7:38. There it was born, and nursed, and educated, that all might appear to be divine and from heaven, since they had there no communication with any part of this earth either for food or learning. But, because he is said to *find* them there, it seems designed also to represent both the bad state and the bad character of that people when God began first to appear for them.

(1.) Their condition was forlorn. Egypt was to them a desert land, and a waste howling wilderness, for they were bond-slaves in it, and cried by reason of their oppression, and were perfectly bewildered and at a loss for relief; there God found them, and thence he fetched them. And,

(2.) Their disposition was very unpromising. So ignorant were the generality of them in divine things, so stupid and unapt to receive the impressions of them, so peevish and humoursome, so froward and quarrelsome, and withal so strangely addicted to the idolatries of Egypt, that they might well be said to be found in a desert land; for one might as reasonably expect a crop of corn from a barren wilderness as any good fruit of service to God from a people of such a character. Those that are renewed and sanctified by grace should often remember what they were by nature.

2. *He led him about and instructed him*. When God had them in the wilderness he did not bring them directly to Canaan, but made them go a great way about, and so he instructed them; that is,

(1.) by this means he took time to instruct them, and gave them commandments as they were able to receive them. Those whose business it is to instruct others must not expect it will be done of a sudden; learners must have time to learn.

(2.) By this means he tried their faith, and patience, and dependence upon God, and inured them to the hardships of the wilderness, and so instructed them. Every stage had something in it that was instructive; even when he chastened them, he thereby *taught them out of his law*. It is said (¹⁹⁷Psalm 107:7) that he *led them forth by the right way*; and yet here that he *led them about*; for God always leads his people the right way, however to us it may seem circuitous: so that the furthest way about proves, if not the nearest way, yet the best way home to Canaan. How God instructed them is explained long after (¹⁹⁸Nehemiah 9:13), *Thou gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes, and commandments*; and especially (v. 20), *Thou gavest them also thy good Spirit to instruct them*; and he instructs effectually. We may well imagine how unfit that people would have been for Canaan had they not first gone through the discipline of the wilderness.

3. *He kept him as the apple of his eye*, with all the care and tenderness that could be, from the malignant influences of an open sky and air, and all the perils of an inhospitable desert. The pillar of cloud and fire was both a guide and a guard to them.

4. He did that for them which the eagle does for her nest of young ones, v. 11, 12. The similitude was touched, (¹⁹⁹Exodus 19:4, *I bore you on eagles' wings*); here it is enlarged upon. The eagle is observed to have a strong affection for her young, and to show it, not only as other creatures by protecting them and making provision for them, but by educating them and teaching them to fly. For this purpose she stirs them out of the nest where they lie dozing, flutters over them, to show them how they must use their wings, and then accustoms them to fly upon her wings till they have learnt to fly upon their own. This, by the way, is an example to parents to train up their children to business, and not to indulge them in idleness and the love of ease. God did thus by Israel; when they were in love with their slavery, and loth to leave it, God, by Moses, stirred them up to aspire after liberty, and many a time kept them from returning to the house of bondage. He carried them out of Egypt, led them into the wilderness, and now at length had led them through it. *The Lord alone did lead him*, he

needed not any assistance, nor did he take any to be partner with him in the achievement, which was a good reason why they should serve the Lord only and no other, so much as in partnership, much less in rivalry with him. There was no strange god with him to contribute to Israel's salvation, and therefore there should be none to share in Israel's homage and adoration, ^{<380>}Psalm 81:9.

III. The settling of them in a good land. This was done in part already, in the happy planting of the two tribes and a half, an earnest of what would speedily and certainly be done for the rest of the tribes.

1. They were blessed with glorious victories over their enemies (v. 13): *He made him ride on the high places of the earth*, that is, he brought him on with conquest, and brought him home with triumph. he rode over the high places or strong holds that were kept against him, sat in ease and honour upon the fruitful hills of Canaan. In Egypt they looked mean, and were so, in poverty and disgrace; but in Canaan they looked great, and were so, advanced and enriched; they rode in state, as a people whom the King of kings delighted to honour.

2. With great plenty of all good things. Not only the ordinary increase of the field, but, which was uncommon, *Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock*, which may refer either,

(1.) To their miraculous supply of fresh water out of the rock that followed them in the wilderness, which is called *honey and oil*, because the necessity they were reduced to made it as sweet and acceptable as honey and oil at another time. Or,

(2.) To the great abundance of honey and oil they should find in Canaan, even in those parts that were least fertile. The rocks in Canaan should yield a better increase than the fields and meadows of other countries. Other productions of Canaan are mentioned, v. 14. Such abundance and such variety of wholesome food (and every thing the best in its kind) that every meal might be a feast if they pleased: excellent bread made of the best corn, here called the *kidneys of the wheat* (for a grain of wheat is not unlike a kidney), butter and milk in abundance, the flesh of cattle well fed, and for their drink, no worse than the *pure blood of the grape*; so indulgent a Father was God to them, and so kind a benefactor. Ainsworth makes the plenty of good things in Canaan to be a figure of the fruitfulness of Christ's kingdom, and the heavenly comforts of his word and Spirit: for

the children of his kingdom he has butter and milk, the sincere milk of the word; and strong meat for strong men, with the wine that makes glad the heart.

DEUTERONOMY 32:15-18

THE SONG OF MOSES

We have here a description of the apostasy of Israel from God, which would shortly come to pass, and to which already they had a disposition. One would have thought that a people under so many obligations to their God, in duty, gratitude, and interest, would never have turned from him; but, alas! they *turned aside quickly*. Here are two great instances of their wickedness, and each of them amounted to an apostasy from God: —

I. Security and sensuality, pride and insolence, and the other common abuses of plenty and prosperity, v. 15. These people were called *Jeshurun* — *an upright people* (so some), *a seeing people*, so others: but they soon lost the reputation both of their knowledge and of their righteousness; for, being well-fed,

1. They *waxed fat*, and *grew thick*, that is, they indulged themselves in all manner of luxury and gratifications of their appetites, as if they had nothing to do but to *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it*. They *grew fat*, that is, they grew big and unwieldy, unmindful of business, and unfit for it; dull and stupid, careless and senseless; and this was the effect of their plenty. Thus *the prosperity of fools destroys them*,

Proverbs 1:32. Yet this was not the worst of it.

2. They *kicked*; they grew proud and insolent, and *lifted up the heel* even against God himself. If God rebuked them, either by his prophets or by his providence, they *kicked against the goad*, as an *untamed heifer*, or a *bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, and in their rage persecuted the prophets, and flew in the face of providence itself. And thus he *forsook God that made him* (not paying due respect to his creator, nor answering the ends of his creation), and put an intolerable contempt upon *the rock of his salvation*, as if he were not indebted to him for any past favours, nor had any dependence upon him for the future. Those that make a god of themselves and a god of their bellies, in pride and wantonness, and cannot

bear to be told of it, certainly thereby forsake God and show how lightly they esteem him.

II. Idolatry was the great instance of their apostasy, and which the former led them to, as it made them sick of their religion, self-willed, and fond of changes. Observe,

1. What sort of gods they chose and offered sacrifice to, when they forsook the God that made them, v. 16, 17. This aggravated their sin that those very services which they should have done to the true God they did,

(1.) To *strange gods*, that could not pretend to have done them any kindness, or laid them under any obligation to them, gods that they had no knowledge of, nor could expect any benefit by, for they were strangers. Or they are called *strange gods*, because they were other than the one only true God, to whom they were betrothed and ought to have been faithful.

(2.) To *new gods, that came newly up*; for even in religion, the antiquity of which is one of its honours, vain minds have strangely affected novelty, and, in contempt of the Ancient of days, have been fond of new gods. A new god! can there be a more monstrous absurdity? Would we find the right way to rest, we must ask for the *good old way*, ²⁴¹⁶Jeremiah 6:16. It was true their fathers had worshipped *other gods* (⁴²⁴²Joshua 24:2), and perhaps it had been some little excuse if the children had returned to them; but to serve *new gods whom their fathers feared not*, and to like them the better for being new, was to open a door to endless idolatries.

(3.) They were such as were no gods at all, but mere counterfeits and pretenders; their names the invention of men's fancies, and their images the work of men's hands. Nay,

(4.) They were devils. So far from being *gods, fathers and benefactors* to mankind, they really were *destroyers* (so the word signifies), such as aimed to do mischief. If there were any spirits or invisible powers that possessed their idol-temples and images, they were evil spirits and malignant powers, whom yet they did not need to worship for fear they should hurt them, as they say the Indians do; for those that faithfully worship God are out of the devil's reach: nay, the devil can destroy those only that sacrifice to him. How mad are idolaters, who forsake the *rock of salvation* to run themselves upon the *rock of perdition!*

2. What a great affront this was to Jehovah their God.

(1.) It was justly interpreted a forgetting of him (v. 18): *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful.* Mindfulness of God would prevent sin, but, when the world is served and the flesh indulged, God is forgotten; and can any thing be more base and unworthy than to forget the God that is the author of our being, by whom we subsist, and in whom we live and move? And see what comes of it, ^{<370>}Isaiah 17:10,11, *Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength,* though the strange slips be pleasant plants at first, yet the harvest at last *will be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.* There is nothing got by forgetting God.

(2.) It was justly resented as an inexcusable offence: *They provoked him to jealousy and to anger* (v. 16), for their idols were abominations to him. See here God's displeasure against idols, whether they be set up in the heart or in the sanctuary.

[1.] He is jealous of them, as rivals with him for the throne in the heart.

[2.] He hates them, as enemies to his crown and government.

[3.] He is, and will be, very angry with those that have any respect or affection for them. Those consider not what they do that provoke God; for *who knows the power of his anger?*

~~<370>~~ DEUTERONOMY 32:19-25

THE SONG OF MOSES

The method of this song follows the method of the predictions in the foregoing chapter, and therefore, after the revolt of Israel from God, described in the foregoing verses, here follow immediately the resolves of divine Justice concerning them; we deceive ourselves if we think that God will be thus mocked by a foolish faithless people, that play fast and loose with him.

I. He had delighted in them, but now he would reject them with detestation and disdain, v. 19. When the Lord saw their treachery, and folly, and base ingratitude, he abhorred them, he despised them, so some read it. Sin makes us odious in the sight of the holy God; and no sinners are so loathsome to him as those that he has called, and that have called

themselves, his sons and his daughters, and yet have been provoking to him. Note, The nearer any are to God in profession the more noisome are they to him if they are defiled in a sinful way, ^{<1969>}Psalm 106:39, 40.

II. He had given them the tokens of his presence with them and his favour to them; but now he would withdraw and *hide his face from them*, v. 20. His *hiding his face* signifies his great displeasure; they had *turned their back* upon God, and now God would turn his back upon them (compare ^{<2187>}Jeremiah 18:17 with ^{<2127>}Jeremiah 2:27); but here it denotes also the slowness of God's proceedings against them in a way of judgment. They began in their apostasy with omissions of good, and so proceeded to commissions of evil. In like manner God will first suspend his favours, and let them see what the issue of that will be, what a friend they lose when they provoke God to depart, and will try whether this will bring them to repentance. Thus we find God hiding himself, as it were, in expectation of the event, ^{<2517>}Isaiah 57:17. To justify himself in leaving them he shows that they were such as there was no dealing with; for, 1. They were froward and a people that could not be pleased, or obstinate in sin, and that could not be convinced and reclaimed.

2. They were faithless, and a people that could not be trusted. When he saved them, and took them into covenant, he said, *Surely they are children that will not lie* (^{<2518>}Isaiah 63:8); but when they proved otherwise, *children in whom is no faith*, they deserved to be abandoned, and that the God of truth should have no more to do with them.

III. He had done every thing to make them easy and to please them, but now he would do that against them which should be most vexatious to them. The punishment here answers the sin, v. 21.

1. They had provoked God with despicable deities which were not gods at all, but vanities, creatures of their own imagination, that could not pretend either to merit or to repay the respects of their worshippers; the more vain and vile the gods were after which they went a whoring the greater was the offence to that great and good God whom they set them up in competition with and contradiction to. This put two great evils into their idolatry, ^{<2123>}Jeremiah 2:13.

2. God would therefore plague them with despicable enemies, that were worthless, weak, and inconsiderable, and not deserving the name of a people, which was a great mortification to them, and aggravated the

oppressions they groaned under The more base the people were that tyrannised over them the more barbarous they would be (none so insolent as a beggar on horseback), besides that it would be infamous to Israel, who had so often triumphed over great and mighty nations, to be themselves trampled upon by the weak and foolish, and to come under the curse of Canaan, who was to be a servant of servants. But God can make the weakest instrument a scourge to the strongest sinner; and those that by sin insult their might Creator are justly insulted by the meanest of their fellow-creatures. This was remarkably fulfilled in the days of the judges, when they were sometimes oppressed by the very Canaanites themselves, whom they had subdued, ^{<300>}Judges 4:2. But the apostle applies it to the conversion of the Gentiles, who had been a people not in covenant with God, and foolish in divine things, yet were brought into the church, sorely to the grief of the Jews, who upon all occasions showed a great indignation at it, which was both their sin and their punishment, as envy always is, ^{<510>}Romans 10:19.

IV. He had planted them in a good land, and replenished them with all good things; but now he would strip them of all their comforts, and bring them to ruin. The judgments threatened are very terrible, v. 22-25.

1. The fire of God's anger shall consume them, v. 22. Are they proud of their plenty? It shall burn up the increase of the earth. Are they confident of their strength? It shall destroy the very foundations of their mountains: there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission to lay all waste. It shall burn to the lowest hell, that is, it shall bring them to the very depth of misery in this world, which yet would be but a faint resemblance of the complete and endless misery of sinners in the other world. The damnation of hell (as our Saviour calls it) is the fire of God's anger, fastening upon the guilty conscience of a sinner, to its inexpressible and everlasting torment, ^{<2308>}Isaiah 30:33.

2. The arrows of God's judgments shall be spent upon them, till his quiver is quite exhausted, v. 23. The judgments of God, like arrows, fly swiftly (^{<1640>}Psalm 64:7), reaching those at a distance who flatter themselves with hopes of escaping them, ^{<1208>}Psalm 21:8, 12. They come from an unseen hand, but wound mortally, for God never misses his mark, ^{<1224>}1 Kings 22:34. The particular judgments here threatened are,

(1.) Famine: *they shall be burnt, or parched, with hunger.*

(2.) Pestilence and other diseases, here called *burning heat and bitter destruction*.

(3.) The insults of the inferior creatures: *the teeth of beasts and the poison of serpents*, v. 24.

(4.) War and the fatal consequences of it, v. 25.

[1.] Perpetual frights. When the *sword is without*, there cannot but be *terror within*. ~~406~~2 Corinthians 7:5, *Without were fightings, within were fears*. Those who cast off the fear of God are justly exposed to the fear of enemies.

[2.] Universal deaths. The sword of the Lord, when it is sent to lay all waste, will destroy without distinction; neither the strength of the young man nor the beauty of the virgin, neither the innocency of the suckling nor the gravity or infirmity of the man of gray hairs, will be their security from the sword when it devours one as well as another. Such devastation does war make, especially when it is pushed on by men as ravenous as wild beasts and as venomous as serpents, v. 24. See here what mischief sin does, and reckon those fools that make a mock at it.

~~406~~ DEUTERONOMY 32:26-38

THE SONG OF MOSES

After many terrible threatenings of deserved wrath and vengeance, we have here surprising intimations of mercy, undeserved mercy, which rejoices against judgment, and by which it appears that God has *no pleasure in the death of sinners*, but would rather they should *turn and live*.

I. In jealousy for his own honour, he will not *make a full end* of them, v. 26-28.

1. It cannot be denied but that they deserved to be utterly ruined, and that their *remembrance should be made to cease from among men*, so that the name of an Israelite should never be known but in history; *for they were a nation void of counsel* (v, 28), the most sottish inconsiderate people that ever were, that would not believe the gory of God, though they saw it, nor

understand his loving kindness, though they tasted it and lived upon it. Of those who could cast off such a God, such a law, such a covenant, for vain and dunghill-deities, it might truly be said, There is *no understanding in them*.

2. It would have been an easy thing with God to ruin them and blot out the remembrance of them; when the greatest part of them were cut off by the sword, it was but scattering the remnant into some remote obscure corners of the earth, where they should never have been heard of any more, and the thing had been done. See ^{<362>}Ezekiel 5:12. God can destroy those that are most strongly fortified, disperse those that are most closely united, and bury those names in perpetual oblivion that have been most celebrated.

3. Justice demanded it: *I said I would scatter them*. It is fit those should be cut off from the earth that have cut themselves off from their God; why should they not be dealt with according to their deserts?

4. Wisdom considered the pride and insolence of the enemy, which would take occasion from the ruin of a people that had been so dear to God, and for whom he had done such great things, to reflect upon God and to imagine that because they had got the better of Israel they had carried the day against the God of Israel: *The adversaries will say, Our hand is high*, high indeed, when it has been too high for those whom God himself fought for; nor will they consider that *the Lord has done all this*, but will dream that they have done it in despite of him, as if the God of Israel were as weak and impotent, and as easily run down, as the pretended deities of other nations.

5. In consideration of this, Mercy prevails for the sparing of a remnant and the saving of that unworthy people from utter ruin: *I feared the wrath of the enemy*. It is an expression after the manner of men; it is certain that God fears no man's wrath, but he acted in this matter as if he had feared it. Those few good people in Israel that had a concern for the honour of God's name *feared the wrath of the enemy* in this instance more than in any other, as Joshua (^{<363>}Joshua 7:9), and David often; and, because they feared it, God himself is said to fear it. He needed not Moses to plead it with him, but reminded himself of it: *What will the Egyptians say?* Let all those whose hearts tremble for the ark of God and his Israel comfort themselves with this, that God will *work for his own name*, and will not suffer it to be profaned and polluted: how much soever we deserve to be disgraced, God will never *disgrace the throne of his glory*.

II. In concern for their welfare, he earnestly desires their conversion; and, in order to that, their serious consideration of their latter end, v. 29. Observe,

1. Though God had pronounced them a foolish people and of no understanding, yet he wishes they were wise, as ^{<87B>}Deuteronomy 5:29, *O that there were such a heart in them!* and ^{<89B>}Psalm 94:8, *You fools, when will you be wise?* God delights not to see sinners ruin themselves, but desires they will help themselves; and, if they will, he is ready to help them.

2. It is a great piece of wisdom, and will contribute much to the return of sinners to God, seriously to consider the latter end, or the future state. It is here meant particularly of that which God by Moses had foretold concerning this people in the latter days: but it may be applied more generally. We ought to understand and consider,

(1.) The latter end of life, and the future state of the soul. To think of death as our removal from a world of sense to a world of spirits, the final period of our state of trial and probation, and our entrance upon an unchangeable state of recompence and retribution.

(2.) The latter end of sin, and the future state of those that live and die in it. O that men would consider the happiness they will lose, and the misery they will certainly plunge themselves into, if they *go on still in their trespasses, what will be in the end thereof*, ^{<24B>}Jeremiah 5:31. Jerusalem forgot this, and therefore *came down wonderfully*, ^{<21B>}Lamentations 1:9.

III. He calls to mind the great things he had done for them formerly, as a reason why he should not quite cast them off. This seems to be the meaning of that (v. 30, 31), “How should one Israelite have been too hard for a thousand Canaanites, as they have been many a time, but that God, who is greater than all gods, fought for them!” And so it corresponds with that, ^{<25B>}Isaiah 63:10, 11. When he was *turned to be their enemy*, as here, *and fought against them* for their sins, *then he remembered the days of old*, saying, *Where is he that brought them out of the sea?* So here, his arm begins to awake as in the days of old *against the wrath of the enemy*, ^{<81B>}Psalm 138:7. there was a time when the enemies of Israel were sold by their own rock, that is, their own idol-gods, who could not help them, but betrayed them, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, had shut them up as sheep for the slaughter. For the enemies themselves must own that their

gods were a very unequal match for the God of Israel. *For their vine is of the vine of Sodom*, v. 32, 33. This must be meant of the enemies of Israel, who fell so easily before the sword of Israel because they were ripe for ruin, and the measure of their iniquity was full. Yet these verses may be understood of the strange prevalency of the enemies of Israel against them, when God made use of them as the *rod of his anger*, ^{<2305>}Isaiah 10:5, 6. “How should one Canaanite chase a thousand Israelites” (as it is threatened against those that trust to Egypt for help, ^{<2307>}Isaiah 30:17, *One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one*) “unless Israel's rock had deserted them and given them up.” For otherwise, however they may impute their power to *their gods* (^{<2311>}Habakkuk 1:11), as the Philistines imputed their victory to Dagon, it is certain the enemies' rock could not have prevailed against the rock of Israel; God would soon have subdued their enemies (^{<2314>}Psalm 81:14), but that the wickedness of Israel delivered them into their hands. For their vine, that is, Israel's, is of the *vine of Sodom*, v. 32, 33. They were planted a choice vine, wholly a right seed, but by sin had become the *degenerate plant of a strange vine* (^{<2421>}Jeremiah 2:21), and not only transcribed the iniquity of Sodom, but outdid it, ^{<2368>}Ezekiel 16:48. God called them his *vineyard*, his *pleasant plant*, ^{<2317>}Isaiah 5:7. But their fruits were,

1. Very offensive, and displeasing to God, bitter as gall.

2 Very malignant, and pernicious one to another, *like the cruel venom of asps*. Some understand this of their punishment; their sin would be *bitterness in the latter end* (^{<1026>}2 Samuel 2:26), it would *bite like a serpent and sting like an adder*, ^{<2314>}Job 20:14, ^{<2332>}Proverbs 23:32.

IV. He resolves upon the destruction of those at last that had been their persecutors and oppressors. When the cup of trembling goes round, the king of Babel shall pledge it at last, ^{<2526>}Jeremiah 25:26, and see ^{<2522>}Isaiah 51:22, 23. The day is coming when the judgment that began at the house of God shall end with the sinner and ungodly, ^{<1047>}1 Peter 4:17, 18. God will in due time bring down the church's enemies.

1. In displeasure against their wickedness, which he takes notice of, and keeps an account of, v. 34, 35. “Is not this implacable fury of theirs against Israel *laid up in store with me*, to be reckoned for hereafter, when it shall be made to appear that *to me belongs vengeance?*” Some understand it of the sin of Israel, especially their persecuting the prophets, which was laid

up in store against them from the *blood of righteous Abel*, ^{<4235>}Matthew 23:35. However it teaches us that the wickedness of the wicked is all laid up in store with God.

- (1.) He observes it, ^{<4908>}Psalm 90:8. He knows both what the vine is and what the grapes are, what is the temper of the mind and what are the actions of life.
- (2.) He keeps a record of it both in his own omniscience and in the sinner's conscience; and this is *sealed up among his treasures*, which denotes both safety and secrecy: these books cannot be lost, nor will they be opened till the great day. See ^{<3832>}Hosea 13:12.
- (3.) He often delays the punishment of sin for a great while; it is laid up in store, till the measure be full, and the day of divine patience has expired. See ^{<873>}Job 21:28-30.
- (4.) There is a day of reckoning coming, when all the treasures of guilt and wrath will be broken up, and the sin of sinners shall surely find them out.

[1.] The thing itself will certainly be done, for the Lord is a *God to whom vengeance belongs*, and therefore he will repay, ^{<2898>}Isaiah 59:18. This is quoted by the apostle to show the severity of God's wrath against those that revolt from the faith of Christ, ^{<3010>}Hebrews 10:30.

[2.] It will be done in due time, in the best time; nay, it will be done in a short time. *The day of their calamity is at hand*; and, though it may seem to tarry, it lingers not, it slumbers not, but makes haste. *In one hour*, shall the judgment of Babylon come.

2. He will do it in compassion to his own people, who, though they had greatly provoked him, yet stood in relation to him, and their misery appealed to his mercy (v. 36): *The Lord shall judge his people*,. that is, judge for them against their enemies, plead their cause, and break the yoke of oppression under which they had long groaned, *repenting himself for his servants*; not changing his mind, but changing his way, and fighting for them, as he had fought against them, *when he sees that their power is gone*. This plainly points at the deliverances God wrought for Israel by the judges out of the hands of those to whom he had sold them for their sins (see ^{<0711>}Judges 2:11-18), and how *his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel* (^{<0716>}Judges 10:16), and this when they were reduced to the last extremity. God helped them when they could not help themselves; for

there was *none shut up or left*; that is, none that dwelt either in cities or walled towns, in which they were shut up, nor any that dwelt in scattered houses in the country, in which they were left at a distance from neighbours. Note, God's time to appear for the deliverance of his people is when things are at the worst with them. God tries his people's faith, and stirs up prayer, by letting things go to the worst, and then magnifies his own power, and fills the faces of his enemies with shame and the hearts of his people with so much the greater joy, by rescuing them out of extremity as *brands out of the burning*.

3. He will do it in contempt and to the reproach of idol-gods, v. 37, 38. *Where are their gods?* Two ways it may be understood:

(1.) That God would do that for his people which the idols they had served could not do for them. They had forsaken God, and been very liberal in their sacrifices to idols, had brought to their altars the *fat of their sacrifices* and the *wine of their drink-offerings*, which they supposed their deities to feed upon and on which they feasted with them. “Now,” says God, “will these gods you have made your court to, at so great an expense, help you in your distress, and so repay you for all your charges in their service? *Go get you to the gods you have served, and let them deliver you,* ^{<0714>}Judges 10:14. This is intended to convince them of their folly in forsaking a God that could help them for gods that could not, and so to bring them to repentance and qualify them for deliverance. When the adulteress shall *follow after her lovers and not overtake them*, pray to her idols and receive no kindness from them, *then she shall say, I will go and return to my first husband,* ^{<3117>}Hosea 2:7. See ^{<2362>}Isaiah 16:12; ^{<2427>}Jeremiah 2:27, 28. Or,

(2.) That God would do that against his enemies which the idols they had served could not save them from, Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar boldly challenged the God of Israel to deliver his worshippers (^{<2370>}Isaiah 37:10; ^{<2185>}Daniel 3:15), and he did deliver them, to the confusion of their enemies. But the God of Israel challenged Bel and Nebo to deliver their worshippers, to rise up and help them, and to be their protection (^{<2372>}Isaiah 47:12, 13); but they were so far from helping them that they themselves, that is, their images, which was all that was of them, *went into captivity,* ^{<2411>}Isaiah 46:1, 2. Note, Those who trust to any rock but God will find it sand in the day of their distress; it will fail them when they most need it.

DEUTERONOMY 32:39-43

THE SONG OF MOSES

This conclusion of the song speaks three things:

I. Glory to God, v. 39. “See now upon the whole matter, *that I, even I, am he*. Learn this from the destruction of idolaters, and the inability of their idols to help them.” The great God here demands the glory,

1. Of a self-existence: *I, even I, am he*. Thus Moses concludes with that name of God by which he was first made to know him (^{<1014>}Exodus 3:14), “*I am that I am*. I am he that I have been, that I will be, that I have promised to be, that I have threatened to be; all shall find me true to my word.” The Targum of Uzzielides paraphrases it thus: *When the Word of the Lord shall reveal himself to redeem his people, he shall say to all people, See that I now am what I am, and have been, and I am what I will be*, which we know very well how to apply to him who said to John, *I am he who is, and was, and is to come*, ^{<1018>}Revelation 1:8. These words, *I, even I, am he*, we meet with often in those chapters of Isaiah where God is encouraging his people to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, ^{<340>}Isaiah 41:4; 43:11, 13, 25, 46:4.

2. Of a sole supremacy. “*There is no god with me*. None to help with me, none to cope with me.” See ^{<2450>}Isaiah 43:10, 11.

3. Of an absolute sovereignty, a universal agency: *I kill, and I make alive*; that is, all evil and all good come from his hand to providence; he forms both the light of life and the darkness of death, ^{<2417>}Isaiah 45:7; ^{<2418>}Lamentations 3:37, 38. Or, He kills and wounds his enemies, but heals and makes alive his own people, kills and wounds with his judgments those that revolt from him and rebel against him; but, when they return and repent, he heals them, and makes them alive with his mercy and grace. Or it denotes his incontestable authority to dispose of all his creatures, and the beings he has given them, so as to serve his own purposes by them: *Whom he will he slays, and whom he will he keeps alive*, when his judgments are abroad. Or thus, *Though he kill, yet he makes alive again: though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion*, ^{<2419>}Lamentations 3:32. *Though he have torn, he will heal us*, ^{<3401>}Hosea 6:1, 2. The Jerusalem Targum reads it, *I kill those that are alive in this world, and make those*

alive in the other world that are dead. And some of the Jewish doctors themselves have observed that death, and a life after it, that is, eternal life, is intimated in these words.

4. Of an irresistible power, which cannot be controlled: *Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand* those that I have marked for destruction. As no exception can be made against the sentence of God's justice, so no escape can be made from the executions of his power.

II. Terror to his enemies, v. 40-42. Terror indeed to those that hate him, as all those do that serve other gods, that persist in wilful disobedience to the divine law, and that malign and persecute his faithful servants. These are those to whom God will render vengeance, those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them. In order to alarm such in time to repent and return to their allegiance, the wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against them.

1. The divine sentence is ratified with an oath (v. 40): He *lifts up his hand to heaven*, the habitation of his holiness; this was an ancient and very significant sign used in swearing, ^{<112>}Genesis 14:22. And, since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself and his own life. Those are miserable without remedy that have the word and oath of God against them. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, that the sin of sinners shall be their ruin if they go on in it.

2. Preparation is made for the execution: The *glittering sword is whet*. See ^{<102>}Psalms 7:12. It is a sword *bathed in heaven*, ^{<315>}Isaiah 34:5. While the sword is in whetting, space is given to the sinner to repent and make his peace, which, if he neglects, will render the wound the deeper. And, as the sword is whet, so the hand that is to wield it takes hold on judgment with a resolution to go through with it.

3. The execution itself will be very terrible: The *sword shall devour flesh* in abundance, and the *arrows* be made *drunk with blood*, such vast quantities of it shall be shed, the blood of the slain in battle, and of the captives, to whom no quarter shall be given, but who shall be put under military execution. When he begins revenge he will make an end; for in this also his work is perfect. The critics are much perplexed with the last clause, *From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy*. The learned bishop Patrick (that great master) thinks it may admit this reading, *From the king to the slave of the enemies*, ^{<315>}Jeremiah 50:35-37. When the

sword of God's wrath is drawn it will make bloody work, blood to the horse-bridles, ~~640~~ Revelation 14:20.

III. Comfort to his own people (v. 43): *Rejoice, O you nations, with his people.* He concludes the song with words of joy; for in God's Israel there is a remnant whose end will be peace. God's people will rejoice at last, will rejoice everlastingly. Three things are here mentioned as the matter of joy: —

- 1.** The enlarging of the church's bounds. The apostle applies the first words of this verse to the conversion of the Gentiles. ~~650~~ Romans 15:10, *Rejoice you Gentiles with his people.* See what the grace of God does in the conversion of souls, it brings them to rejoice with the people of God; for true religion brings us acquainted with true joy, so great a mistake are those under that think it tends to make men melancholy.
- 2.** The avenging of the church's controversies upon her adversaries. He will make inquisition for *the blood of his servants*, and it shall appear how precious it is to him; for those that spilt it shall have blood given them to drink.
- 3.** The mercy God has in store for his church, and for all that belong to it: He will be *merciful to his land, and to his people*, that is, to all every where that fear and serve him. Whatever judgments are brought upon sinners, it shall go well with the people of God; in this let Jews and Gentiles rejoice together.

~~654~~ DEUTERONOMY 32:44-52

THE SONG OF MOSES

Here is,

I. The solemn delivery of this song to the children of Israel, v. 44, 45. Moses spoke it to as many as could hear him, while Joshua, in another assembly, at the same time, delivered it to as many as his voice would reach. Thus coming to them from the mouth of both their governors, Moses who was laying down the government, and Joshua who was taking it up, they would see they were both in the same mind, and that, though they changed their commander, there was no change in the divine

command; Joshua, as well as Moses, would be a witness against them if ever they forsook God.

II. An earnest charge to them to mind these and all the rest of the good words that Moses had said to them. How earnestly does he long after them all, how very desirous that the word of God might make deep and lasting impressions upon them, how jealous over them with a godly jealousy, lest they should at any time let slip these great things!

1. The duties he charges upon them are,

(1.) Carefully to attend to these themselves: “Set your hearts both to the laws, and to the promises and threatenings, the blessings and curses, and now at last to this song. Let the mind be closely applied to the consideration of these things; be affected with them; be intent upon your duty, and cleave to it with full purpose of heart.”

(2.) Faithfully to transmit these things to those that should come after them: “What interest you have in your children, or influence upon them, use it for this purpose; and *command them* (as your father Abraham did, ~~189~~Genesis 18:19) *to observe to do all the words of this law.*” Those that are good themselves cannot but desire that their children may be so likewise, and that posterity may keep up religion in their day and the entail of it may not be cut off.

2. The arguments he uses to persuade them to make religion their business and to persevere in it are,

(1.) The vast importance of the things themselves which he had charged upon them (v. 47): “*It is not a vain thing, because it is your life.* It is not an indifferent thing, but of absolute necessity; it is not a trifle, but a matter of consequence, a matter of life and death; mind it, and you are made for ever; neglect it, and you are for ever undone.” O that men were but fully persuaded of this, that religion is their life, even the life of their souls!

(2.) The vast advantage it would be of to them: *Through this thing you shall prolong your days* in Canaan, which is a typical promise of that eternal life which Christ has assured us those shall enter into that keep the commandments of God, ~~197~~Matthew 19:17.

III. Orders given to Moses concerning his death. Now that this renowned witness for God had finished his testimony, he must go up to Mount Nebo

and die; in the prophecy of Christ's two witnesses there is a plain allusion to Moses and Elias (~~Gal~~ Revelation 11:6), and perhaps their removal, being by martyrdom, is no less glorious than the removal either of Moses or Elias. Orders were given to Moses that self-same day, v. 48. Now that he had done his work, why should he desire to live a day longer? He had indeed formerly prayed that he might go over Jordan, but now he is entirely satisfied, and, as God had bidden him, *saith no more of that matter.*

1. God here reminds him of the sin he had been guilty of, for which he was excluded Canaan (v. 51), that he might the more patiently bear the rebuke because he had sinned, and that now he might renew his sorrow for that unadvised word, for it is good for the best of men to die repenting of the infirmities they are conscious to themselves of. It was an omission that was thus displeasing to God; he did *not sanctify God*, as he ought to have done, *before the children of Israel*, he did not carry himself with a due decorum in executing the orders he had then received.

2. He reminds him of the death of his brother Aaron (v. 50), to make his own the more familiar and the less formidable. Note, It is a great encouragement to us, when we die, to think of our friends that have gone before us through that darksome valley, especially of Christ, our elder brother and great high priest.

3. He sends him up to a high hill, thence to take a view of the land of Canaan and then die, v. 49, 50. The remembrance of his sin might make death terrible, but the sight God gave him of Canaan took off the terror of it, as it was a token of God's being reconciled to him, and a plain indication to him that though his sin shut him out of the earthly Canaan, yet it should not deprive him of that better country which in this world can only be seen, and that with an eye of faith. Note, Those may die with comfort and ease whenever God calls for them (notwithstanding the sins they remember against themselves) who have a believing prospect and a well-grounded hope of eternal life beyond death.