

CHAPTER 3

Moses, in this chapter, relates,

- I.** The conquest of Og, king of Bashan, and the seizing of his country (v. 1-11).
- II.** The distribution of these new conquests to the two tribes and a half (v. 12-17). Under certain provisos and limitations (v. 18-20).
- III.** The encouragement given to Joshua to carry on the war which was so gloriously begun (v. 21, 22).
- IV.** Moses's request to go over into Canaan (v. 23-25), with the denial of that request, but the grant of an equivalent (v. 26, etc.).

~~DEUT~~ DEUTERONOMY 3:1-11

OG SUBDUED

We have here another brave country delivered into the hand of Israel, that of Bashan; the conquest of Sihon is often mentioned together with that of Og, to the praise of God, the rather because in these Israel's triumphs began, ~~DEUT~~ Psalm 135:11; 136:19, 20. See,

- I.** How they got the mastery of Og, a very formidable prince,
 - 1.** Very strong, for he was of the remnant of the giants (v. 11); his personal strength was extraordinary, a monument of which was preserved by the Ammonites in his bedstead, which was shown as a rarity in their chief city. You might guess at his weight by the materials of his bedstead; it was iron, as if a bedstead of wood were too weak for him to trust to: and you might guess at his stature by the dimensions of it; it was nine cubits long and four cubits broad, which, supposing a cubit to be but half a yard (and some learned men have made it appear to be somewhat more), was four yards and a half long, and two yards broad; and if we allow his bedstead to be two cubits longer than himself, and that is as much as we need allow, he was three yards and a half high, double the stature of an ordinary man, and every way proportionable, yet they smote him, v. 3. Note, when God

pleads his people's cause he can deal with giants as with grasshoppers. No man's might can secure him against the Almighty. The army of Og was very powerful, for he had the command of sixty fortified cities, besides the unwall'd towns, v. 5. Yet all this was nothing before God's Israel, when they came with commission to destroy him.

2. He was very bold and daring: He *came out against Israel to battle*, v. 1. It was wonderful that he did not take warning by the ruin of Sihon, and send to desire conditions of peace; but he trusted to his own strength, and so was hardened to his destruction. Note, Those that are not awakened by the judgments of God upon others, but persist in their defiance of heaven, are ripening apace for the like judgments upon themselves, ~~248~~ Jeremiah 3:8. God bade Moses not fear him, v. 2. If Moses himself was so strong in faith as not to need the caution, yet it is probable that the people needed it, and for them these fresh assurances are designed; “*I will deliver him into thy hand*; not only deliver thee out of his hand, that he shall not be thy ruin, but deliver him *into thy hand*, that thou shalt be his ruin, and make him pay dearly for his attempt.” He adds, *Thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sihon*, intimating that they ought to be encouraged by their former victory to trust in God for another victory, for he is God, and changeth not.

II. How they got possession of Bashan, a very desirable country. They took all the cities (v. 4), and all the spoil of them, v. 7. They made them all their own, v. 10. So that now they had in their hands all that fruitful country which lay east of Jordan, from *the river Arnon unto Hermon*, v. 8. Their conquering and possessing these countries was intended, not only for the encouragement of Israel in the wars of Canaan, but for the satisfaction of Moses before his death. Since he must not live to see the completing of their victory and settlement, God thus gives him a specimen of it. Thus the Spirit is given to those that believe as the *earnest of their inheritance*, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

~~248~~ DEUTERONOMY 3:12-20

ALLOTMENT OF THE CONQUERED LANDS

Having shown how this country which they were now in was conquered, in these verses he shows how it was settled upon the Reubenites, Gadites,

and half the tribe of Manasseh, which we had the story of before, Numbers 32. Here is the rehearsal.

1. Moses specifies the particular parts of the country that were allotted to each tribe, especially the distribution of the lot to the half tribe of Manasseh, the subdividing of which tribe is observable. Joseph was divided into Ephraim and Manasseh; Manasseh was divided into one half on the one side Jordan and the other half on the other side: that on the east side Jordan was again divided into two great families, which had their several allotments: Jair, v. 14, Machir, v. 15. And perhaps Jacob's prediction of the smallness of that tribe was now accomplished in these divisions and subdivisions. Observe that Bashan is here called *the land of the giants*, because it had been in their possession, but Og was the last of them. These giants, it seems, had lost their country, and were rooted out of it sooner than any of their neighbours; for those who, presuming upon their strength and stature, had their hand against every man, had every man's hand against them, and went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

2. He repeats the condition of the grant which they had already agreed to, v. 18-20. That they should send a strong detachment over Jordan to lead the van in the conquest of Canaan, who should not return to their families, at least not to settle (though for a time they might retire thither into winter quarters, at the end of a campaign), till they had seen their brethren in as full possession of their respective allotments as they themselves were now in of theirs. They must hereby be taught not to *look at their own things only, but at the things of others*, ^{<510>}Philippians 2:4. It ill becomes an Israelite to be selfish, and to prefer any private interest before the public welfare. When we are rest we should desire to see our brethren at rest too, and should be ready to do what we can towards it; for we are not born for ourselves, but are members one of another. A good man cannot rejoice much in the comforts of his family unless withal he sees *peace upon Israel*, ^{<438>}Psalms 128:6.

~~<432>~~ DEUTERONOMY 3:21-29

JOSHUA NAMED AS MOSES'S SUCCESSOR

Here is

I. The encouragement which Moses gave to Joshua, who was to succeed him in the government, v. 21, 22. He commanded him not to fear. This those that are aged and experienced in the service of God should do all they can to strengthen the hands of those that are young, and setting out in religion. Two things he would have him consider for his encouragement:

1. What God has done. Joshua had seen what a total defeat God had given by the forces of Israel to these two kings, and thence he might easily infer, *so shall the Lord do to all the rest of the kingdoms* upon which we are to make war. He must not only infer thence that thus the Lord can do with them all, for his arm is not shortened, but thus he will do, for his purpose is not changed; he that has begun will finish; *as for God, his work is perfect*. Joshua had seen it with his own eyes. And the more we have seen of the instances of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, the more inexcusable we are if we *fear what flesh can do unto us*.

2. What God had promised. The *Lord your God he shall fight for you*; and that cause cannot but be victorious which the Lord of hosts fights for. *If God be for us, who can be against us* so as to prevail? We reproach our leader if we follow him trembling.

II. The prayer which Moses made for himself, and the answer which God gave to that prayer.

1. His prayer was that, if it were God's will, he might go before Israel over Jordan into Canaan. At that time, when he had been encouraging Joshua to fight Israel's battles, taking it for granted that he must be their leader, he was touched with an earnest desire to go over himself, which expresses itself not in any passionate and impatient complaints, or reflections upon the sentence he was under, but in humble prayers to God for a gracious reversing of it. *I besought the Lord*. Note, We should never allow any desires in our hearts which we cannot in faith offer up to God by prayer; and what desires are innocent, let them be presented to God. We have not because we ask not. Observe,

(1.) What he pleads here. Two things: —

[1.] The great experience which he had had of God's goodness to him in what he had done for Israel: "*Thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness*. Lord, perfect what thou hast begun. Thou hast given me to see

thy glory in the conquest of these two kings, and the sight has affected me with wonder and thankfulness. O let me see more of the outgoings of my God, my King! This great work, no doubt, will be carried on and completed; let me have the satisfaction of seeing it.” Note, the more we see of God's glory in his works the more we shall desire to see. *The works of the Lord are great, and therefore are sought out more and more of all those that have pleasure therein.*

[2.] The good impressions that had been made upon his heart by what he had seen: For *what God is there in heaven or earth that can do according to thy works?* The more we are affected with what we have seen of God, of his wisdom, power, and goodness, the better we are prepared for further discoveries. Those shall see the works of God that admire him in them. Moses had thus expressed himself concerning God and his works long before (^{<0251>}Exodus 15:11), and he still continues of the same mind, that there are no works worthy to be compared with God's works, ^{<0808>}Psalm 86:8.

(2.) What he begs: *I pray thee let me go over, v. 25.* God had said he should not go over; yet he prays that he might, not knowing but that the threatening was conditional, for it was not ratified with an oath, as that concerning the people was, that they should not enter. Thus Hezekiah prayed for his own life, and David for the life of his child, after both had been expressly threatened; and the former prevailed, though the latter did not. Moses remembered the time when he had by prayer prevailed with God to recede from the declarations which he had made of his wrath against Israel, ^{<0214>}Exodus 32:14. And why might he not hope in like manner to prevail for himself? *Let me go over and see the good land.* Not, “Let me go over and be a prince and a ruler there;” he seeks not his own honour, is content to resign the government to Joshua; but, “Let me go to be a spectator of thy kindness to Israel, to see what I believe concerning the goodness of the land of promise.” How pathetically does he speak of Canaan, that *good land*, that *goodly mountain!* Note, Those may hope to obtain and enjoy God's favours that know how to value them. What he means by *that goodly mountain* we may learn from ^{<0751>}Psalm 78:54, where it is said of God's Israel that *he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain which his right hand had purchased,* where it is plainly to be understood of the whole land of Canaan, yet with an eye to the sanctuary, the glory of it.

2. God's answer to this prayer had in it a mixture of mercy and judgment, that he might sing unto God of both.

(1.) There was judgment in the denial of his request, and that in something of anger too: *The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes*, v. 26. God not only sees sin in his people, but is much displeased with it; and even those that are delivered from the wrath to come may yet lie under the tokens of God's wrath in this world, and may be denied some particular favour which their hearts are much set upon. God is a gracious, tender, loving Father; but he is angry with his children when they do amiss, and denies them many a thing that they desire and are ready to cry for. But how was he wroth with Moses *for the sake of Israel*? Either,

[1.] For that sin which they provoked him to; see ~~Exo~~ Psalm 106:32, 33. Or,

[2.] The removal of Moses at that time, when he could so ill be spared, was a rebuke to all Israel, and a punishment of their sin. Or,

[3.] It was for their sakes, that it might be a warning to them to take heed of offending God by passionate and unbelieving speeches at any time, after the similitude of his transgression; for, if *this were done to such a green tree, what should be done to the dry*? He acknowledges that God would not hear him. God had often heard him for Israel, yet he would not hear him for himself. It was the prerogative of Christ, the great Intercessor, to be heard always; yet of him his enemies said, *He saved others, himself he could not save*, which the Jews would not have upbraided him with had they considered that Moses, their great prophet, prevailed for others, but for himself he could not prevail. Though Moses, being one of the wrestling seed of Jacob, did not seek in vain, yet he had not the thing itself which he sought for. God may accept our prayers, and yet not grant us the very thing we pray for.

(2.) Here is mercy mixed with this wrath in several things: —

[1.] God quieted the spirit of Moses under the decree that had gone forth by that word (v. 26), *Let it suffice thee*. With this word, no doubt, a divine power went to reconcile Moses to the will of God, and to bring him to acquiesce in it. If God does not by his providence give us what we desire, yet, if by his grace he makes us content without it, it comes much to one. *“Let it suffice thee* to have God for thy father, and heaven for thy portion,

though thou hast not every thing thou wouldest have in this world. Be satisfied with this, *God is all-sufficient.*”

[2.] He put an honour upon his prayer in directing him not to insist upon this request: *Speak no more to me of this matter.* It intimates that what God does not think fit to grant we should not think fit to ask, and that God takes such a pleasure in the prayer of the upright that it is no pleasure to him, no, not in any particular instance, to give a denial to it.

[3.] He promised him a sight of Canaan *from the top of Pisgah, v. 27.* Though he should not have the possession of it, he should have the prospect of it; not to tantalize him, but such a sight of it as would yield him true satisfaction, and would enable him to form a very clear and pleasing idea of that promised land. Probably Moses had not only his sight preserved for other purposes, but greatly enlarged for this purpose; for, if he had not had such a sight of it as others could not have from the same place, it would have been no particular favour to Moses, nor the matter of a promise. Even great believers, in this present state, see heaven but at a distance.

[4.] He provided him a successor, one who should support the honour of Moses and carry on and complete that glorious work which the heart of Moses was so much upon, the bringing of Israel to Canaan, and settling them there (v. 28): *Charge Joshua and encourage him* in this work. Those to whom God gives a charge, he will be sure to give encouragement to. And it is a comfort to the church's friends (when they are dying and going off) to see God's work likely to be carried on by other hands, when they are silent in the dust.