

CHAPTER 28

This chapter is a very large exposition of two words in the foregoing chapter, the blessing and the curse. Those were pronounced blessed in general that were obedient, and those cursed that were disobedient; but, because generals are not so affecting, Moses here descends to particulars, and describes the blessing and the curse, not in their fountains (these are out of sight, and therefore the most considerable, yet least considered, the favour of God the spring of all the blessings, and the wrath of God the spring of all the curses), but in their streams, the sensible effects of the blessing and the curse, for they are real things and have real effects.

I. He describes the blessings that should come upon them if they were obedient; personal, family, and especially national, for in that capacity especially they are here treated with (v. 1-14).

II. He more largely describes the curses which would come upon them if they were disobedient; such as would be,

1. Their extreme vexation (v. 15-44).

2. Their utter ruin and destruction at last (v. 45-68). This chapter is much to the same purport with Leviticus 26, setting before them life and death, good and evil; and the promise, in the close of that chapter, of their restoration, upon their repentance, is here likewise more largely repeated, Deuteronomy 30. Thus, as they had precept upon precept in the repetition of the law, so they had line upon line in the repetition of the promises and threatenings. And these are both there and here delivered, not only as sanctions of the law, what should be conditionally, but as predictions of the event, what would be certainly, that for a while the people of Israel would be happy in their obedience, but that at length they would be undone by their disobedience; and therefore it is said (⁴⁵⁰¹Deuteronomy 30:1) that all those things would come upon them, both the blessing and the curse.

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-14

PROMISES

The blessings are here put before the curses, to intimate,

1. That God is slow to anger, but swift to show mercy: he has said it, and sworn, that he would much rather we would obey and live than sin and die. It is his delight to bless.

2. That though both the promises and the threatenings are designed to bring and hold us to our duty, yet it is better that we be allured to that which is good by a filial hope of God's favour than that we be frightened to it by a servile fear of his wrath. That obedience pleases best which comes from a principle of delight in God's goodness. Now,

I. We have here the conditions upon which the blessing is promised.

1. It is upon condition that they *diligently hearken to the voice of God* (v. 1, 2), that they hear God speaking to them by his word, and use their utmost endeavours to acquaint themselves with his will, v. 13.

2. Upon condition that they *observe and do all his commandments* (and in order to obedience there is need of observation) and that they *keep the commandments of God* (v. 9) *and walk in his ways*. Not only do them for once, but keep them for ever; not only set out in his ways, but walk in them to the end.

3. Upon condition that they should not *go aside either to the right hand or to the left*, either to superstition on the one hand, or profaneness on the other; and particularly that they should not go after other gods (v. 14), which was the sin that of all others they were most prone to, and God would be most displeased with. Let them take care to keep up religion, both the form and power of it, in their families and nation, and God would not fail to bless them.

II. The particulars of this blessing.

1. It is promised that the providence of God should prosper them in all their outward concerns. These blessings are said to *overtake them*, v. 2. Good people sometimes, under the sense of their unworthiness, are ready

to fly from the blessing and to conclude that it belongs not to them,; but the blessing shall find them out and follow them notwithstanding. Thus in the great day the blessing will overtake the righteous that say, *Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee?* ⁴²⁵⁷Matthew 25:37. Observe,

(1.) Several things are enumerated in which God by his providence would bless them: —

[1.] They should be safe and easy; a blessing should rest upon their persons wherever they were, *in the city, or in the field*, v. 3. Whether their habitation was in town or country, whether they were husbandmen or tradesmen, whether their business called them into the city or into the field, they should be preserved from the dangers and have the comforts of their condition. This blessing should attend them in their journeys, going out and coming in, v. 6. Their persons should be protected, and the affair they went about should succeed well. Observe here, What a necessary and constant dependence we have upon God both for the continuance and comfort of this life. We need him at every turn, in all the various movements of life; we cannot be safe if he withdraw his protection, nor easy if he suspend his favour; but, if he bless us, go where we will it is well with us.

[2.] Their families should be built up in a numerous issue: blessed *shall be the fruit of thy body* (v. 4), and in that the Lord shall *make thee plenteous* (v. 11), in pursuance of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be *as the stars of heaven* for multitude, and that God would be a God to them, than which a greater blessing, and more comprehensive, could not be entailed upon the fruit of their body. See ²³⁰⁹Isaiah 61:9.

[3.] They should be rich, and have an abundance of all the good things of this life, which are promised them, not merely that they might have the pleasure of enjoying them, but (as bishop Patrick observes out of one of the Jewish writers) that they might have wherewithal to honour God, and might be helped and encouraged to serve him cheerfully and to proceed and persevere in their obedience to him. A blessing is promised, *First*, On all they had without doors, corn and cattle in the field (v. 4, 11), their cows and sheep particularly, which would be blessed for the owners' sakes, and made blessings to them. In order to this, it is promised that God would give them *rain in due season*, which is called his *good treasure* (v. 12), because with this river of God the earth is enriched, ³⁸⁰⁹Psalm 65:9. Our constant supplies we must see coming from God's good treasure, and own

our obligations to him for them; if he withhold his rain, the fruits both of the ground and of the cattle soon perish. *Secondly*, On all they had within doors, the basket and the store (v. 5), the store-houses or barns, v. 8. When it is brought home, God will bless it, and not blow upon it as sometimes he does, ^{<3006>}Haggai 1:6, 9. We depend upon God and his blessing, not only for our yearly corn out of the field, but for our daily bread out of our basket and store, and therefore are taught to pray for it every day.

[4.] They should have success in all their employments, which would be a constant satisfaction to them: *“The Lord shall command the blessing* (and it is he only that can command it) *upon thee, not only in all thou hast, but in all thou doest, all that thou settest thy hand to,”* v. 8. This intimated that even when they were rich they must not be idle, but must find some good employment or other to set their hand to, and God would own their industry, and *bless the work of their hand* (v. 12); for that which *makes rich*, and keeps so, is *the blessing of the Lord upon the hand of the diligent*, ^{<3006>}Proverbs 10:4, 22.

[5.] They should have honour among their neighbours (v. 1): *The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations*. He made them so, by taking them into covenant with himself, ^{<3039>}Deuteronomy 26:19. And he would make them more and more so by their outward prosperity, if they would not by sin disparage themselves. Two things should help to make them great among the nations: — *First*, Their wealth (v. 12): *“Thou shalt lend to many nations upon interest”* (which they were allowed to take from the neighbouring nations), *“but thou shalt not have occasion to borrow.”* This would give them great influence with all about them; for the borrower is servant to the lender. It may be meant of trade and commerce, that they should export abundantly more than they should import, which would keep the balance on their side. *Secondly*, Their power (v. 13): *“The Lord shall make thee the head,* to give law to all about thee, to exact tribute, and to arbitrate all controversies.” Every sheaf should bow to theirs, which would make them so considerable that *all the people of the earth* would be *afraid of them* (v. 10), that is, would reverence their true grandeur, and dread making them their enemies. The flourishing of religion among them, and the blessing of God upon them, would make them formidable to all their neighbours, terrible as an army with banners.

[6.] They should be victorious over their enemies, and prosper in all their wars. If any were so daring as to rise up against them to oppress them, or

encroach upon them, it should be at their peril, they should certainly fall before them, v. 7. The forces of the enemy, though entirely drawn up to come against them one way, should be entirely routed, and flee before them seven ways, each making the best of his way.

(2.) From the whole we learn (though it were well if men would believe it) that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. Though temporal blessings do not take up so much room in the promises of the New Testament as they do in those of the Old, yet it is enough that our Lord Jesus has given us his word (and surely we may take his word) that if we *seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, all other things* shall be added to us, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good; and who can desire them further? ^{<4163>}Matthew 6:33.

2. It is likewise promised that the grace of God should *establish them a holy people*, v. 9. Having taken them into covenant with himself, he would keep them in covenant; and, provided they used the means of stedfastness, he would give them the grace of steadfastness, that they should not depart from him. Note, Those that are sincere in holiness God will establish in holiness; and he is *of power to do it*, ^{<4165>}Romans 16:25. He that is holy shall be holy still; and those whom God establishes in holiness he thereby establishes a people to himself, for a long as we keep close to God he will never forsake us. This establishment of their religion would be the establishment of their reputation (v. 10): *All the people of the earth shall see, and own, that thou art called by the name of the Lord*, that is, “that thou art a most excellent and glorious people, under the particular care and countenance of the great God. They shall be made to know that a people called by the name Jehovah are without doubt the happiest people under the sun, even their enemies themselves being judges.” The favourites of Heaven are truly great, and, first or last, it will be made to appear that they are so, if not in this world, yet at that day when those who confess Christ now shall be confessed by him before men and angels, as those whom he delights to honour.

DEUTERONOMY 28:15-44

THREATENINGS

Having viewed the bright side of the cloud, which is towards the obedient, we have now presented to us the dark side, which is towards the disobedient. If we do not keep God's commandments, we not only come short of the blessing promised, but we lay ourselves under the curse, which is as comprehensive of all misery as the blessing is of all happiness. Observe,

I. The equity of this curse. It is not a curse causeless, nor for some light cause; God seeks not occasion against us, nor is he apt to quarrel with us. That which is here mentioned as bringing the curse is, 1. Despising God, refusing to *hearken to his voice* (v. 15), which bespeaks the highest contempt imaginable, as if what he said were not worth the heeding, or we were not under any obligation to him.

2. Disobeying him, *not doing his commandments*, or not observing to do them. None fall under his curse but those that rebel against his command.

3. Deserting him. "It is because of the *wickedness of thy doings*, not only whereby thou hast slighted me, but *whereby thou hast forsaken me*," 5:20. God never casts us off till we first cast him off. It intimates that their idolatry, by which they forsook the true God for false gods, would be their destroying sin more than any other.

II. The extent and efficacy of this curse.

1. In general, it is declared, "*All these curses shall come upon thee* from above, *and shall overtake thee*; though thou endeavour to escape them, it is to no purpose to attempt it, they shall follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and seize thee, overtake thee, and overcome thee," v. 15. It is said of the sinner, when God's wrath is in pursuit of him, that he *would fain flee out of his hand* (~~3872~~ Job 27:22), but he cannot; if he *flee from the iron weapon*, yet *the bow of steel shall reach him and strike him through*. There is no running from God but by running to him, no fleeing from his justice but by fleeing to his mercy. See ~~4217~~ Psalm 21:7, 8.

(1.) Wherever the sinner goes, the curse of God follows him; wherever he is, it rests upon him. He is cursed *in the city and in the field*, v. 16. The

strength of the city cannot shelter him from it, the pleasant air of the country is no fence against these pestilential steams. He is cursed (v. 19) when he comes in, for the curse is *upon the house of the wicked* (²¹⁰³Proverbs 3:33), and he is cursed when he goes out, for he cannot leave that curse behind him, nor get rid of it, which has entered into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones.

(2.) Whatever he has is under a curse: *Cursed is the ground for his sake*, and all that is on it, or comes out of it, and so he is cursed from the ground, as Cain, ²⁰⁹¹Genesis 4:11. The *basket and store* are cursed, v. 17, 18. All his enjoyments being forfeited by him are in a manner forbidden to him, as cursed things, which he has no title to. To those whose *mind and conscience are defiled* every thing else is so, ²⁰¹⁵Titus 1:15. They are all embittered to him; he cannot take any true comfort in them, for the wrath of God mixes itself with them, and he is so far from having any security of the continuance of them that, if his eyes be open, he may see them all condemned and ready to be confiscated, and with them all his joys and all his hopes gone for ever.

(3.) Whatever he does is under a curse too. It is a curse in all that *he sets his hand to* (v. 20), a constant disappointment, which those are subject to that set their hearts upon the world, and expect their happiness in it, and which cannot but be a constant vexation. This curse is just the reverse of the blessing in the former part of the chapter. Thus whatever bliss there is in heaven there is not only the want of it, but the contrary to it, in hell. ²¹⁶³Isaiah 65:13, *My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry.*

2. Many particular judgments are here enumerated, which would be the fruits of the curse, and with which God would punish the people of the Jews for their apostasy and disobedience. These judgments threatened are of divers kinds, for God has many arrows in his quiver, *four sore judgments* (²¹²¹Ezekiel 14:21), and many more. They are represented as very terrible, and the descriptions of them are exceedingly lively and affecting, that men, knowing these terrors of the Lord, might, if possible, be persuaded. The threatenings of the same judgment are several times repeated, that they might make the more deep and lasting impressions, and to intimate that, if men persisted in their disobedience, the judgment which they thought was over, and of which they said, “Surely the bitterness of it is past,” would return with double force; for when God judges he will overcome.

(1.) Bodily diseases are here threatened, that they should be epidemical in their land. These God sometimes makes use of for the chastisement and improvement of his own people. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* But here they are threatened to be brought upon his enemies as tokens of his wrath, and designed for their ruin. So that according to the temper of our spirits, under sickness, accordingly it is to us a blessing or a curse. But, whatever sickness may be to particular persons, it is certain that epidemical diseases raging among a people are national judgments, and are so to be accounted. He here threatens,

[1.] Painful diseases (v. 35), a sore botch, beginning in the legs and knees, but spreading, like Job's boils, from heat to foot.

[2.] Shameful diseases (v. 27), the botch of Egypt (such boils and blains as the Egyptians had been plagued with, when God brought Israel from among them), and the emerods and scab, vile diseases, the just punishment of those who by sin had made themselves vile.

[3.] Mortal diseases, the pestilence (v. 21), the consumption (put for all chronic diseases), and the fever (for all acute diseases), v. 22. See ~~1776~~ Leviticus 26:16. And all incurable, v. 27.

(2.) Famine, and scarcity of provisions; and this,

[1.] For want of rain (v. 23, 24): *Thy heaven over thy head*, that part that is over thy land, *shall be as dry as brass*, while the heavens over other countries shall distil their dews; and, when the heaven is as brass, the earth of course will be as iron, so hard and unfruitful. Instead of rain, the dust shall be blown out of the highways into the field, and spoil the little that there is of the fruits of the earth.

[2.] By destroying insects. The locust should destroy the corn, so that they should not have so much as their *seed again*, v. 38, 42. And the fruit of the vine, which should make glad their hearts, should all be worm-eaten, v. 39. and the olive, some way or other, should be made to *cast its fruit*, v. 40. The heathen use many superstitious customs in honour of their idol-gods for preserving the fruits of the earth; but Moses tells Israel that the only way they had to preserve them was to keep God's commandments; for he is a God that will not be sported with, like their idols, but will be served in spirit and truth. This threatening we find fulfilled in Israel, ~~1177~~ 1 Kings 17:1; ~~2441~~ Jeremiah 14:1, etc.; ~~2103~~ Joel 1:4.

(3.) That they should be smitten before their enemies in war, who, it is likely, would be the more cruel to them, when they had them at their mercy, for the severity they had used against the nations of Canaan, which their neighbours in after-ages would be apt to remember against them, v. 25. It would make their flight the more shameful, and the more grievous, that they might have triumphed over their enemies if they had but been faithful to their God. The carcasses of those that were slain in war, or died in captivity among strangers, should be *meat for the fowls* (v. 26); and an Israelite, having forfeited the favour of his God, should have so little humanity shown him as that *no man should drive them away*, so odious would God's curse make him to all mankind.

(4.) That they should be infatuated in all their counsels, so as not to discern their own interest, nor bring any thing to pass for the public good: *The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness*, v. 28, 29. Note, God's judgments can reach the minds of men to fill them with darkness and horror, as well as their bodies and estates; and those are the sorest of all judgments which make men a terror to themselves, and their own destroyers. That which they contrived to secure themselves by should still turn to their prejudice. Thus we often find that the allies they confided in *distressed them and strengthened them not*, ^{<1030>}2 Chronicles 28:20. Those that will not walk in God's counsels are justly left to be ruined by their own; and those that are wilfully blind to their duty deserve to be made blind to their interest, and, seeing they *loved darkness rather than light*, let them *grope at noon-day* as in the dark.

(5.) That they should be plundered of all their enjoyments, stripped of all by the proud and imperious conqueror, such as Benhadad was to Ahab, ^{<1216>}1 Kings 20:5, 6. Not only their houses and vineyards should be taken from them, but their wives and children, v. 30, 32. Their dearest comforts, which they took most pleasure in, and promised themselves most from, should be the entertainment and triumph of their enemies. As they had dwelt in houses which they built not, and eaten of vineyards which they planted not (^{<810>}Deuteronomy 6:10, 11), so others should do by them. Their oxen, asses, and sheep, like Job's, should be taken away before their eyes, and they should not be able to recover them, v. 31. And all the fruit of their land and labours should be devoured and eaten up by the enemy; so that they and theirs would want necessaries, while their enemies were revelling with that which they had laboured for.

(6.) That they should be carried captives into a far country; nay, into *all the kingdoms of the earth*, v. 25. Their sons and daughters, whom they promised themselves comfort in, should go into captivity (v. 41), and they themselves at length, and their king in whom they promised themselves safety and settlement, v. 36. This was fully accomplished when the ten tribes first were carried captive into Assyria (^{<276>}2 Kings 17:6), and not long after the two tribes into Babylon, and two of their kings, (^{<284>}2 Kings 24:14, 15; 25:7, 21. That which is mentioned as an aggravation of their captivity is that they should go into an unknown country, the language and customs of which would be very uncouth, and their treatment among them barbarous, and there they should *serve other gods*, that is, be compelled to do so by their enemies, as they were in Babylon, (^{<286>}Daniel 3:6. Note, God often makes men's sin their punishment, and chooses their delusions. You shall *serve other gods*, that is, "You shall serve those that do serve them;" a nation is often in scripture called by the name of its gods, as (^{<287>}Jeremiah 48:7. They had made idolaters their associates, and now god made idolaters their oppressors.

(7.) That those who remained should be insulted and tyrannized over by strangers, v. 43, 44. So the ten tribes were by the colonies which the king of Assyria sent to take possession of their land, (^{<272>}2 Kings 17:24. Or this may be meant of the gradual encroachments which the strangers within their gates should make upon them, so as insensibly to worm them out of their estates. We read of the fulfilling of this, (^{<309>}Hosea 7:9, *Strangers have devoured his strength*. Foreigners ate the bread out of the mouths of trueborn Israelites, by which they were justly chastised for introducing strange gods.

(8.) That their reputation among their neighbours should be quite sunk, and those that had been a name, and a praise, should be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, v. 37. Some have observed the fulfilling of this threatening in their present state; for, when we would express the most perfidious and barbarous treatment, we say, *None but a Jew would have done so*. Thus is sin a reproach to any people.

(9.) To complete their misery, it is threatened that they should be put quite out of the possession of their minds by all these troubles (v. 34): *Thou shalt be mad for the sight of thy eyes*, that is, quite bereaved of all comfort and hope, and abandoned to utter despair. Those that walk by sight, and not by faith, are in danger of losing reason itself, when every thing about

them looks frightful; and their condition is woeful indeed that are *mad for the sight of their eyes*.

DEUTERONOMY 28:45-68

THREATENINGS

One would have thought that enough had been said to possess them with a dread of that *wrath of God* which is *revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. But to show how deep the treasures of that wrath are, and that still there is more and worse behind, Moses, when one would have thought that he had concluded this dismal subject, begins again, and adds to this roll of curses many similar words: as Jeremiah did to his, ^{28:45}Jeremiah 36:32. It should seem that in the former part of this commination Moses foretells their captivity in Babylon, and the calamities which introduced and attended that, by which, even after their return, they were brought to that low and poor condition which is described, v. 44. That their enemies should be *the head*, and they *the tail*: but here, in this latter part, he foretels their last destruction by the Romans and their dispersion thereupon. And the present deplorable state of the Jewish nation, and of all that have incorporated themselves with them, by embracing their religion, does so fully and exactly answer to the prediction in these verses that it serves for an incontestable proof of the truth of prophecy, and consequently of the divine authority of the scripture. And, this last destruction being here represented as more dreadful than the former, it shows that their sin, in rejecting Christ and his gospel, was more heinous and more provoking to God than idolatry itself, and left them more under the power of Satan; for their captivity in Babylon cured them effectually of their idolatry in seventy years' time; but under this last destruction now for above 1600 years they continue incurably averse to the Lord Jesus. Observe,

I. What is here said in general of the wrath of God, which should light and lie upon them for their sins.

1. That, if they would not be *ruled by the commands of God*, they should certainly be *ruined by his curse*, v. 45, 46. Because thou didst not *keep his commandments* (especially that of hearing and obeying the great prophet), *these curses shall come upon thee*, as upon a people appointed to

destruction, the generation of God's wrath: and they shall be *for a sign* and *for a wonder*. It is amazing to think that a people so long the favourites of Heaven should be so perfectly abandoned and cast off, that a people so closely incorporated should be so universally dispersed, and yet that a people so scattered in all nations should preserve themselves distinct and not mix with any, but like Cain be fugitives and vagabonds, and yet marked to be known.

2. That, if they would not serve God with cheerfulness, they should be compelled to *serve their enemies* (v. 47, 48), that they might know the difference (^{442B}2 Chronicles 12:8), which, some think, is the meaning of ^{450B}Ezekiel 20:24, 25, *Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good*. Observe here,

(1.) It is justly expected from those to whom God gives an abundance of the good things of this life that they should serve him. What does he maintain us for out that we may do his work, and be some way serviceable to his honour?

(2.) The more God gives us the more cheerfully we should serve him; our abundance should be oil to the wheels of our obedience. God is a Master that will be served with gladness, and delights to hear us sing at our work.

(3.) If, when we receive the gifts of God's bounty, we either do not serve him at all or serve him with reluctance, it is a righteous thing with him to make us know the hardships of want and servitude. Those deserve to have cause given them to complain who complain without a cause. *Tristis es et felix — Happy, and yet not easy!* Blush at thy own folly and ingratitude.

3. That, if they would not *give glory to God* by a reverential obedience, he would get *him honour upon them* by *wonderful* plagues, v. 58, 59. Note,

(1.) God justly expects from us that we should fear his fearful name; and, which is strange, that name which is here proposed as the object of our fear is, THE LORD THY GOD, which is very fitly here put in our Bibles in capital letters; for nothing can sound more truly august. As nothing is more comfortable, so nothing more awful, than this, that he with whom we have to do is Jehovah, a being infinitely perfect and blessed, and the author of all being; and that he is our God, our rightful Lord and owner, from whom we are to receive laws and to whom we are to give account: this is great, and greatly to be feared.

(2.) We may justly expect from God that, if we do not fear his fearful name, we shall feel his fearful plagues; for one way or other God will be feared. All God's plagues are dreadful, but some are wonderful, carrying in them extraordinary signatures of divine power and justice, so that a man, upon the first view of them, may say, *Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

II. How the destruction threatened is described. Moses is here upon the same melancholy subject that our Saviour is discoursing of to his disciples in his farewell sermon (Matthew 24), namely, The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. Observe,

1. Five things are here foretold as steps to their ruin: —

(1.) That they should be invaded by a foreign enemy (v 49, 50): *A nation from far*, namely, the Romans, *as swift as the eagle* hastening to the prey. Our Saviour makes use of this similitude, in foretelling this destruction, that *where the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together*, ⁴²⁸Matthew 24:28. And bishop Patrick observes (to make the accomplishment the more remarkable) that the ensign of the Roman armies was an eagle. This nation is said to be of a fierce countenance, an indication of a fierce nature, stern and severe, that would not pity the weakness and infirmity either of little children or of old people.

(2.) That the country should be laid waste, and all the fruits of it eaten up by this army of foreigners, which is the natural consequence of an invasion, especially when it is made, as that by the Romans was, for the chastisement of rebels: *He shall eat the fruits of thy cattle and land* (v. 51), so that the inhabitants should be starved, while the invaders were fed to the full.

(3.) That their cities should be besieged, and that such would be the obstinacy of the besieged, and such the vigour of the besiegers, that they would be reduced to the last extremity, and at length fall into the hands of the enemy, v. 52. No place, though ever so well fortified, no, not Jerusalem itself, though it held out long, would escape. Two of the common consequences of a long siege are here foretold: —

[1.] A miserable famine, which would prevail to such a degree that, for want of food, they should *kill and eat their own children*, v. 53. Men should do so, notwithstanding their hardiness, and ability to bear hunger;

and, though obliged by the law of nature to provide for their own families, yet should refuse to give to the wife and children that were starving any of the child that was barbarously butchered, v. 54, 55. Nay, women, ladies of quality, notwithstanding their natural niceness about their food, and their natural affection to their children, yet, for want of food, should so far forget all humanity as to kill and eat them, v. 56, 57. Let us observe, by the way, how hard this fate must needs be to the tender and delicate women, and learn not to indulge ourselves in tenderness and delicacy, because we know not what we may be reduced to before we die; the more nice we are, the harder it will be to us to bear want, and the more danger we shall be in or sacrificing reason, and religion, and natural affection itself, to the clamours and cravings of an unmortified and ungoverned appetite. This threatening was fulfilled in the letter of it, more than once, to the perpetual reproach of the Jewish nation: never was the like done either by Greek or barbarian, but in the siege of Samaria, a woman *boiled her own son*, ¹⁷⁶⁸2 Kings 6:28, 29. And it is spoken of as commonly done among them in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, ²⁰⁴⁰Lamentations 4:10. And, in the last siege by the Romans, Josephus tells us of a noble woman that killed and ate her own child, through the extremity of the famine, and when she had eaten one half secretly (v. 57), that she might have it to herself, the mob, smelling meat, got into the house, to whom she showed the other half, which she had kept till another time, inviting them to share with her. What is too barbarous for those to do that are abandoned of God!

[2.] Sickness is another common effect of a strait and long siege, and that is here threatened: *Sore sickness, and of long continuance*, v. 59. These should attend the Jews wherever they went afterwards, the diseases of Egypt, leprosies, botches, and foul ulcers, v. 60. Nay, as if the particular miseries here threatened were not enough, he concludes with an *et cetera*, v. 61. The Lord will bring upon thee every sickness, and every plague, though it be *not written in the book of this law*. Those that fall under the curse of God will find that the one half was not told them of the weight and terror of that curse.

(4.) That multitudes of them should perish, so that they should become *few in number*, v. 62. It was a nation that God had wonderfully increased, so that they were *as the stars of heaven for multitude*; but, for their sin, they were *diminished and brought low*, ¹⁴⁷⁸Psalms 107:38, 39. It is computed that in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, as appears by the account Josephus gives of it, above two millions fell by the sword at

several places, besides what perished by famine and pestilence; so that the whole country was laid waste and turned into a wilderness. That is a terrible word (v. 63), *As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, so he will rejoice over you to destroy you.* Behold here *the goodness and severity of God*: mercy here shines brightly in the pleasure God takes in doing good — he rejoices in it; yet justice here appears no less illustrious in the pleasure he takes in destroying the impenitent; not as it is the making of his creatures miserable, but as it is the asserting of his own honour and the securing of the ends of his government. See what a malignant mischievous thing sin is, which (as I may say) makes it necessary for the God of infinite goodness to rejoice in the destruction of his own creatures, even those that had been favourites.

(5.) That the remnant should be scattered throughout the nations This completes their woe: *The Lord shall scatter thee among all people*, v. 64. This is remarkably fulfilled in their present dispersion, for there are Jews to be found almost in all countries that are possessed either by Christians or Mahometans, and in such numbers that it has been said, If they could unite in one common interest, they would be a very formidable body, and able to deal with the most powerful states and princes; but they abide under the power of this curse, and are so scattered that they are not able to incorporate. It is here foretold that in this dispersion,

[1.] They should have no religion, or none to any purpose, should have no temple, nor altar, nor priesthood, for they should *serve other gods*. Some think this has been fulfilled in the force put upon the Jews in popish countries to worship the images that are used in the Romish church, to their great vexation.

[2.] They should have no rest, no rest of body: *The sole of thy foot shall not have rest* (v. 65), but be continually upon the remove, either in hope of gain or fear of persecution; all wandering Jews: no rest of the mind (which is much worse), but a *trembling heart* (v. 65); *no assurance of life* (v. 66); weary both of light and darkness, which are, in their turns, both welcome to a quiet mind, but to them both day and night would be a terror, v. 67. Such was once the condition of Job (~~xxxiv~~ Job 7:4), but to them this should be constant and perpetual; that blindness and darkness which the apostle speaks of as having happened to Israel, and that guilt which *bowed down their back always* (~~slit~~ Romans 11:8-10), must needs occasion a constant restlessness and amazement. Those are a torment to themselves, and to all

about them, that fear day and night and are always uneasy. Let good people strive against it, and not give way to that fear which has torment; and let wicked people not be secure in their wickedness, for their hearts cannot endure, nor can their hands be strong, when the terrors of God set themselves in array against them. Those that say *in the morning, O that it were evening*, and *in the evening, O that it were morning*, show, *First*, A constant fret and vexation, chiding the hours for lingering and complaining of the length of every minute. Let time be precious to us when we are in prosperity, and then it will not be so tedious to us when we are in afflictions as otherwise it would. *Secondly*, A constant fright and terror, afraid in the morning of the *arrow that flieth by day*, and therefore wishing the day over; but what will this do for them? When evening comes, the trembling heart is no less apprehensive of the *terror by night*, Psalm 91. 5, 6. Happy they whose minds, being stayed on God, are *quiet from the fear of evil!* Observe here, The terror arises not only from the sight of the eyes, but from the fear of the heart, not only from real dangers, but from imaginary ones; the causes of fear, when they come to be enquired into, often prove to be only the creatures of the fancy.

2. In the close, God threatens to leave them as he found them, in a *house of bondage* (v. 68): *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again*, that is into such a miserable state as they were in when they were slaves to the Egyptians, and ruled by them with rigour. God had brought them out of Egypt, and had said, *They shall see it no more again* (⁽⁶⁷⁾Deuteronomy 17:16); but now they should be reduced to the same state of slavery that they had been in there. To be sold to strangers would be bad enough, but much worse to be sold to their enemies. Even slaves may be valued as such, but a Jew should have so ill a name for all that is base that when he was exposed to sale no man would buy him, which would make his master that had him to sell the more severe with him. Thirty Jews (they say) have been sold for one small piece of money, as they sold our Saviour for thirty pieces.

3. Upon the whole matter,

(1.) The accomplishment of these predictions upon the Jewish nation shows that Moses spoke by the Spirit of God, who certainly foresees the ruin of sinners, and gives them warning of it, that they may prevent it by a true and timely repentance, or else be left inexcusable.

(2.) Let us all hence learn to stand in awe and not to sin. I have heard of a wicked man, who, upon reading the threatenings of this chapter, was so enraged that he tore the leaf out of the Bible, as Jehoiakim cut Jeremiah's roll; but to what purpose is it to deface a copy, while the original remains upon record in the divine counsels, by which it is unalterably determined that *the wages of sin is death*, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear?