

Deuteronomy 20 - 34, Section 6 of 6.

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Deuteronomy 20.

"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be when ye are come nigh unto the battle that priest shall approach, and speak unto the people, and shall say, unto them, Hear, O Israel; ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies let not your hearts faint; fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you (Vers. 1-4.)

How wonderful to think of the Lord as a Man of war! Think of His fighting against people! Some find it very hard to take in the idea — to understand how a benevolent Being could act in such a character. But the difficulty arises mainly from not distinguishing between the different dispensations. It was just as consistent with the character of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to fight against His enemies, as it is with the character of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive them. And inasmuch as it is the revealed character of God that furnishes the model on which His people are to be found — the standard by which they are to act, it was quite as consistent for Israel to cut their enemies in pieces, as it is for us to love them, pray for them, and do them good.

If this very simple Principle were borne in mind, it would remove a quantity of misunderstanding, and save a vast amount of unintelligent discussion. No doubt it is thoroughly wrong for the church of God to go to war. No one can read the New Testament, with a mind free from bias, and not see this. We are positively commanded to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us. "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword." And again, in another gospel, "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Again, our Lord says to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, *then would my servants fight*" — it would be perfectly consistent them so to do. . . . "But *now* is my kingdom not from hence" — and therefore it would be wholly out of character utterly inconsistent, thoroughly wrong for them to fight.

Ah this is so plain that we need only say, "How readest thou?" Our blessed Lord did not fight; He meekly and patiently submitted to all manner of abuse and ill-treatment, and in so doing He left us an example that we should follow His steps. If we only honestly ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" it would close all discussion on this point as well as on a thousand other points besides. There is really no use in reasoning, no need of it. If the words and ways of our blessed Lord, and the distinct teaching of His Spirit, by His holy apostles, be not sufficient for our guidance, all discussion is utterly vain.

And, if we be asked, What does the Holy Ghost teach on this great practical point? Hear His precious clear and pointed words. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; *I will repay* saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12.)

These are the lovely ethics of the church of God: the principles of that heavenly kingdom to which all true Christians belong. Would they have suited Israel of old? Certainly not. Only conceive Joshua acting toward the Canaanites on the principles of Romans 12! It would have been as flagrant an inconsistency as for us to act on the principle of Deuteronomy 20. How is this? Simply because, in Joshua's day, God was executing judgement in righteousness; whereas, now, He is dealing in unqualified grace. This makes all the difference. The principle of divine action is the grand moral regulator for God's people in all ages. If this be seen, all difficulty is removed, all discussion definitively closed.

But then if any feel disposed to ask, "What about the world? How could it get on upon the principle of grace? Could it act on the doctrine of Romans 12: 20?" Not for a moment. The idea is simply absurd. To attempt to amalgamate the principles of grace with the law of nations, or to infuse the spirit of the New Testament into the framework of political economy would instantly plunge civilized society into hopeless confusion. And here is just where many most excellent and well-meaning people are astray. They want to press the nations of the world into the adoption of a principle which would be destructive of their national existence. The time is not come yet for nations to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more. That blessed time will come, thank God, when this groaning earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But to seek to get nations, now to act upon peace principles is simply to ask them to cease to be; in a word, it is thoroughly hopeless, unintelligent labour. It cannot be. We are not called upon to regulate the world, but to pass through it, as pilgrims and strangers. Jesus did not come to set the world right. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and as to the world, He testified of it that its deeds were evil. He will, ere long come to set things right. He will take to Himself His great power and reign. The kingdoms of this world shall, most assuredly, become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. He will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. All this is most blessedly true: but we must wait His time. It can be of no possible use for us, by our ignorant efforts, to seek to bring about a condition of things which all scripture goes to prove can only be introduced by the personal presence and rule of our beloved and adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But we must proceed with our chapter.

Israel were called to fight the Lord's battles. The moment they put their foot upon the land of it was war to the knife with the doomed inhabitants. "Of the cities of these people which the Lord God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou save alive nothing that breatheth." This was distinct and emphatic. The seed of Abraham were not only to possess the land of Canaan, but they were to be God's instruments in executing His just judgement upon the guilty inhabitants, whose sins had risen up to heaven, and become absolutely intolerable.

Does any one feel called upon to apologise for the divine actings towards the seven nations of Canaan. If so, let him be well assured of this that his labour is perfectly gratuitous, entirely uncalled for. What folly for any poor worm of the earth to think of entering upon such work! And what folly, too for any one to require an apology or an explanation. It was a high honour put upon Israel to exterminate those guilty nations — an honour of which they proved themselves utterly unworthy, inasmuch as they failed to do as they were commanded. They left alive many of those who ought to have been utterly destroyed; they spared them to be the wretched instruments of their own ultimate ruin, by leading them into the self-same sins which had so loudly called for divine judgement.

But let us look, for a moment, at the qualifications which were necessary for those who would

fight the Lord's battles. We shall find the opening paragraph of our chapter full of most precious instruction for ourselves in the spiritual warfare which we are called to wage.

The reader will observe that the people, on approaching to the battle, were to be addressed, first, by the priest, and secondly, by the officers. This order is very beautiful. The priest came forward to unfold to the people their high *privileges*; the officers came to remind them of their holy *responsibilities*. Such is the divine order here. Privilege comes first, and then responsibility. "The priest shall approach, and speak unto the people, and shall say unto them, Hear O Israel; ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your hearts faint, fear not and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you".

What blessed words are these! How full of comfort and encouragement! How eminently calculated to banish all fear and depression, and to infuse courage and confidence into the most sinking fainting heart! The priest was the very expression of the grace of God; his ministry a stream of most precious consolation flowing from the loving heart of the God of Israel to each individual warrior. His loving words were designed and fitted to gird up the loins of the mind, and nerve the feeblest arm for fight. He assures them of the divine presence with them. There is no question, no condition, no "if," no "but." It is an unqualified statement. Jehovah Elohim was with them. This surely was enough. It mattered not, in the smallest degree how many, how powerful, or how formidable were their enemies; they would all prove to be as chaff before the whirlwind, in the presence of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.

But then the *officer* had to be heard as well as the *priest*. "And the officers shall speak unto the people; saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it let him go return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that In fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart. And it shall be that when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people." (vers. 5-9.)

Thus we learn that there were two things absolutely essential to all who would fight the Lord's battles, namely, a heart thoroughly disentangled from the things of nature and of earth; and a bold unclouded confidence in God. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." There is a very material difference between being *engaged* in the affairs of this life, and being *entangled* by them. A man might have had a house, a vineyard, and a wife, and yet have been fit for the battle. These things were not, in themselves, a hindrance; but it was having them under such conditions as rendered them an entanglement that unfitted a man for the conflict.

It is well to bear this in mind. We, as Christians, are called to carry on a constant spiritual warfare. We have to fight for every inch of heavenly ground. What the Canaanites were to Israel, the wicked spirits in the heavenlies are to us. We are not called to fight for eternal life; we have gotten that as God's free gift, before we begin. We are not called to fight for salvation; we are saved before we enter upon the conflict. It is most needful to know what it is that we have to fight for, and whom we are to fight with. The object for which we fight is make good, maintain, and carry out, practically, our

heavenly position and character, in the midst of scenes and circumstances of ordinary human life, from day to day. And then as to our spiritual foes they are wicked spirits who, during this present time, are permitted to occupy the heavenlies. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood" — as Israel had to do in Canaan — "but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers [*kosmokratōras*] of this darkness, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies."

Now, the question is, what do we want in carrying on such a conflict as this? Must we abandon our lawful earthly callings? Must we detach ourselves from those relationships founded on nature and sanctioned of God? Is it needful to become an ascetic, a mystic or a monk, in order to carry on the spiritual warfare to which We are called? By no means; indeed for a Christian to do any one of these things would, in itself, be a proof that he had completely mistaken his calling, or that he had, at the very outset, fallen in the battle. We are imperatively called upon to work with our hands the thing is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth. And not only so, but we have the ample guidance, in the pages of the New Testament as to how we are to carry ourselves in the varied natural relationships which God Himself has established, and to which He has affixed the seal of His approval. Hence it is perfectly plain that earthly callings and natural relationships are, in themselves no hindrance to our waging a successful spiritual warfare.

What then is needed by the Christian warrior? A heart thoroughly disentangled from things earthly and natural; and an unclouded confidence in God. But how are these things to be maintained? Hear the divine reply. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in *the evil day*," — that is the whole time from the cross to the coming of Christ - and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of *righteousness* and your feet shod with the Preparation of the gospel of *peace*! above all, taking the shield of *faith*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph 6.)

Reader, mark the qualification of a Christian warrior as here set forth: by the Holy Ghost. It is not the question of a house, a vineyard or a wife, but of having the inward man governed by "truth;" the outward conduct characterised by real practical "righteousness;" the moral habits and ways marked by the sweet "peace" of the gospel; the whole man covered by the impenetrable shield of "faith;" the seat of the understanding guarded by the full assurance of "salvation; and the heart continually sustained and strengthened by persevering prayer and supplication; and led forth in earnest intercession for all saints, and specially for the Lord's beloved workmen and their blessed work. This is the way in which the spiritual Israel of God are to be furnished for the warfare which they are called to wage with wicked spirits in the heavenlies. May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, make all these things very real in our souls' experience, and in our practical career, from day to day!

The close of our chapter contains the principles which were to govern Israel in their warfare. They were most carefully to discriminate between the cities which were very far off from them, and those that pertained to the seven judged nations. To the former they were, in the first place, to make overtures of peace. With the latter, on the contrary, they were to make no terms whatever. "When thou comest nigh unto a *city to fight against it*, then *proclaim peace* unto it" — a marvellous method of fighting! — "And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it; and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof" — as expressing the

positive energy of evil — "with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof" — all that was capable of being turned to account, in the service of God, and of His people- thou shalt take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which not of the cities of these nations."

Indiscriminate slaughter and wholesale destruction formed no part of Israel's business. If any cities were disposed to accept the proffered terms of peace, they were to have the privilege of becoming tributaries to the people of God; and, in reference to those cities which would make no peace, all within their walls which could be made use of was to be reserved.

There are things in nature and things of earth which are capable of being used for God, they are sanctified by the word of God and prayer. We are told to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations; which simply means that if this world's riches come into the Christian's hands, he should diligently and faithfully use them in the service of Christ; he should freely distribute them to the poor, and to all the Lord's needy workmen; in short, he should make them available, in every right and prudent way, for the furtherance of the Lord's work in every department. In this way, the very riches which else might crumble into dust in their hands, or prove to be as rust on their souls, shall produce precious fruit that shall serve to minister an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Many seem to find considerable difficulty in Luke 16: 9; but its teaching is as clear and forcible as it is practically important. We find very similar instruction in 1 Timothy 6 "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, *ready to distribute*, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a Good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."* There is not a fraction which we spend, directly and simply, for Christ which will not be before us by and-by. The thought of this, though it should not, by any means, be a motive spring, may well encourage us to devote all we have, and all we are, to the service of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

{*It may interest the reader to know that the four leading authorities agree in reading *ontos* instead of *aioniou*, in 1 Timothy 6: 19. Thus the passage would be, "That they may lay hold on life in earnest" or in reality. The only real life is to live for Christ; to live in the light of eternity; to use all we possess for the promotion of God's glory, and with an eye to the everlasting mansions. This, and only this, is life in earnest.}

Such is the plain teaching of Luke 16 and 1 Timothy 6; let us see that we understand it. The expression, "That they may receive you into everlasting habitations" simply means that what is spent for Christ will be rewarded in the day that is coming. Even a cup of cold water given in His precious Name shall have its sure reward in His everlasting kingdom. Oh! to spend and be spent for Him!

But we muse close this section by quoting the few last lines of our chapter, in which we have a very beautiful illustration of the way in which our God looks after the smallest matters, and His gracious care that nothing should be lost or injured. "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege; only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued." (Vers. 19, 20.)

"Let nothing be lost," is the Master's own word to us — a word which should ever be kept in remembrance. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." We should carefully guard against all reckless waste of ought that can be made available for human use. Those who occupy the place of domestic servants should give their special attention to this matter. It is painful, at times, to witness the sinful waste of human food. Many a thing is flung out as offal which might supply a welcome meal for a needy family. If a Christian servant should read these lines, we would earnestly entreat him or her to weigh this subject in the divine presence, and never to practise or sanction the waste of the smallest atom that is capable of being turned to account for human use. We may depend upon it that to waste any creature of God is displeasing in His sight. Let us remember that His eye is upon us; and may it be our earnest desire to be agreeable to Him in all our ways.

Deuteronomy 21.

"If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him; then *thy elders* and *thy judges*" — the guardians of the claims of truth and righteousness — "shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities that are round about him that is slain; and it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a *rough valley* which is neither eared nor sown and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley. And *the priests the sons of Levi* — exponents of grace and mercy — "shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to *minister* unto him, and to *bless* in the name of the Lord, and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried" — blessed, comforting fact! — "And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley; and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood to thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord." (Vers. 1-9.)

A very interesting and suggestive passage of holy scripture now lies open before us, and claims our attention. A sin is committed, a man is found slain in the land; but no one knows ought about it, no one can tell whether it is murder or manslaughter, or who committed the deed. It lies entirely beyond the range of human knowledge. And yet, there it is, an undeniable fact. Sin has been committed, and it lies as a stain on the Lord's land, and man is wholly incompetent to deal with it.

What then is to be done? The glory of God and the purity of His land must be maintained. He knows all about it, and He alone can deal with it; and truly His mode of dealing with it is full of most precious teaching.

First of all, the elders and judges appear on the scene. The claims of truth and righteousness must be duly attended to; justice and judgement must be perfectly maintained. This is a great cardinal truth running all through the word of God. *Sin* must be judged, ere *sins* can be forgiven, or the sinner justified. Ere mercy's heavenly voice can be heard, justice must be perfectly satisfied, the throne of God vindicated, and His Name glorified. grace must reign through righteousness. Blessed be God that it is so! What a glorious truth for all who have taken their true place as sinners! God has been glorified as to the question of sin, and therefore He can, in perfect righteousness, pardon and justify the sinner.

But we must confine ourselves simply to the interpretation of the passage before us; and, in so doing, we shall find in it a very wonderful onlook into Israel's future. True, the great foundation truth of atonement is presented; but it is with special reference to Israel. The death of Christ is here seen in its

two grand aspects, namely, as the expression of Man's guilt, and the display of God's grace, the former we have in the man found slain in the field; the latter in the heifer slain in the rough valley. The elders and the judges find out the city nearest to the slain man; and nothing can avail for that city save the blood of a spotless victim — the blood of the One who was slain at the guilty city of Jerusalem.

The reader will note, with much interest, that the moment the claims of justice were met by the death of the victim, a new element is introduced into the scene. "The priests the sons of Levi shall come near." This is grace acting on the blessed ground of righteousness. The priests are the channels of grace, as the judges are the guardians of righteousness. How perfect, how beautiful is scripture, in every page, every paragraph, every sentence! It was not until the blood was shed that the ministers of grace could present themselves. The heifer beheaded in the valley changed the aspect of things completely "The priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and *by their word*" — blessed fact for Israel! blessed fact for every true believer! — "shall *every controversy* and *every stroke be tried*." All is to be settled on the glorious and eternal principle of grace reigning through righteousness.

Thus it is that God will deal with Israel by-and-by. We must not attempt to interfere with the primary application of all those striking institutions which come under our notice in this profound and marvellous book of Deuteronomy. No doubt, there are lessons for us — precious lessons; but we may rest perfectly assured that the true way in which to understand and appreciate those lessons is to see their true and proper bearing. For instance, how precious, how full of consolation, the fact that it is by the word of the minister of grace that every controversy and every stroke is to be tried, for repentant Israel by-and-by, and for every repentant soul now! Do we lose ought of the deep blessedness of this by seeing and owning the proper application of the scripture? Assuredly not; so far from this, the true secret of profiting by any special passage of the word of God is to understand its true scope and bearing.

"And all the elders of that city that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley."* "I will wash my hands in innocency; and so will I compass thine altar." The true place to wash the hands is where the blood of atonement has for ever expiated our guilt. "And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. and the blood shall be forgiven them."

{*How full of suggestive power is the figure of "the *rough valley*!" How aptly it sets forth what this world at large, and the land of Israel in particular, was to our blessed Lord and Saviour! Truly it was a rough place to Him, a place of humiliation, a dry and thirsty land a place that had never been eared or sown. But, all homage to His Name! by His death in this rough valley, He has procured for this earth and for the land of Israel a rich harvest of blessing which shall be reaped throughout the millennial age to the full praise of redeeming love. And even now, He from the throne of heaven's majesty, and we, in spirit with Him, can look back to that rough valley as the place where the blessed work was done which forms the imperishable foundation of God's glory, the church's blessing, Israel's full restoration, the joy of countless nations, and the glorious deliverance of this groaning creation. }

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Unto you, first, God having raised up his Son Jesus sent him to bless you, by turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Thus all Israel shall be saved and blessed by-and-by, according to the eternal counsels of God, and in pursuance of His promise and oath to Abraham, ratified and eternally established by the precious blood of Christ, to whom be all homage and praise, world without end!

Verses 10-17 bear, in a very special way, upon Israel's relationship to Jehovah. We shall not dwell upon it here. The reader will find numerous references to this subject, throughout the pages of the prophets, in which the Holy Ghost makes the most touching appeals to the conscience of the nation — appeals grounded on the marvellous fact of the relationship into which He had brought them to Himself, but in which they had so signally and grievously failed. Israel has proved an unfaithful wife, and, in consequence thereof, has been set aside. But the time will come when this long rejected but never forgotten people shall not only be reinstated but brought into a condition of blessedness, privilege and glory beyond anything ever known in the past.

This must never, for a moment, be lost sight of or interfered with. It runs like a brilliant golden line through the prophetic scriptures from Isaiah to Malachi; and the lovely theme is resumed and carried on in the New Testament. Take the following glowing passage, which is only one of a hundred. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof Go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah [My delight is in her], and thy land Beulah [married]; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy Sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength" — let men beware how they meddle with this! — "Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured; but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the court of my holiness.... Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." (Isa. 62)

To attempt to alienate this sublime and glorious passage from its proper object, and apply it to the Christian church, either on earth or in heaven, is to do positive violence to the word of God, and introduce a system of interpretation utterly destructive of the integrity of holy scripture. The passage which we have just transcribed with intense spiritual delight, applies only to the literal Zion, the: literal Jerusalem, the literal land of Israel. Let the reader see that he thoroughly seizes and faithfully holds fast this fact.

As to the church, her position on earth is that of an espoused virgin, not of a married wife. Her marriage will take place in heaven. (Rev. 19: 7, 8) To apply to her such passages as the above is to falsify her position entirely, and deny the plainest statements of scripture as to her calling, her portion, and her hope, which are purely heavenly.

Verses 18-21 of our chapter record the case of "a stubborn and rebellious son." Here again we have Israel viewed from another standpoint. It is the apostate generation for which there is no forgiveness. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and

rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear.

The reader may, with much interest, contrast the solemn action of law and government, in the case of the rebellious son, with the lovely and familiar parable of the prodigal son, in Luke 15. Our space does not admit of our dwelling upon it here, much as we should delight to do so. It is marvellous to think that it is the same God who speaks and acts in Deuteronomy 21 and in Luke 15. But oh! how different the action! how different the style! Under the law, the father is called upon to lay hold of his son, and bring him forth to be stoned. Under grace, the father runs to meet the returning son; falls on his neck and kisses him; clothes him in the best robe, puts a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; has the fatted calf killed for him; seats him at the table with himself, and makes the house ring with the joy that fills his own heart at getting back the poor wandering spendthrift.

Striking contrast! In Deuteronomy we see *the hand of God*, in righteous government, executing judgement upon the rebellious. In Luke 15 we see the *heart of God* pouring itself out, in soul-subduing tenderness, upon the poor repentant one, giving him the sweet assurance that it is His own deep joy to get back His lost one. The persistent rebel meets the stone of judgement; the returning penitent meets the kiss of love.

But we must close this section by calling the reader's attention to the last verse of our chapter. It is referred to in a very remarkable way by the inspired apostle, in Galatians 3 "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

This reference is full of interest and value, not only because it presents to us the precious grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in making Himself a curse for us, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on us poor sinners of the Gentiles; but also because it furnishes a, very striking illustration of the way in which the Holy Spirit puts His seal upon the writings of Moses, in general, and upon Deuteronomy. in particular. All scripture hangs together so perfectly that if one part be touched you mar the integrity of the whole. The same Spirit breathes in the writings of Moses, in the pages of the prophets, in the four evangelists, in the Acts, in the apostolic epistles general and particular, and in that most profound and precious section which closes the divine Volume. We deem it our sacred duty (as it is, most assuredly, our high privilege) to press this weighty fact upon all with whom we come in contact; and we would, very earnestly, entreat the reader to give it his earnest attention, to hold it fast and bear a steady testimony to it, in this day of carnal laxity, cold indifference and positive hostility.

Deuteronomy 22-25.

The portion of our book on which we now enter, though not calling for elaborate exposition, yet teaches us two very important practical lessons In the first place, many of the institutions and ordinances here set forth prove and illustrate, in a most striking way, the terrible depravity of the human heart. They show us, with unmistakable distinctness, what man is capable of doing, if left to himself. We must ever remember, as we read some of the paragraphs of this section of Deuteronomy, that God the Holy Ghost has indicted them. We, in our fancied wisdom, may feel disposed to ask why such passages were ever penned? Can it be possible that they are actually inspired by the Holy Ghost? and of what possible value can they be to us? If they were written for our learning, then what are we to learn from them?

Our reply to all these questions is, at once, simple and direct; and it is this, the very passages

which we might least expect to and on the page of inspiration teach us, in their own peculiar way, the moral material of which we are made, and the moral depths into which we are capable of plunging. And is not this of great moment? Is it not well to have a faithful mirror held up before our eyes in which we may see every moral trait, feature and lineament perfectly reflected? Unquestionably. We hear a great deal about the dignity of human nature, and very many find it exceedingly hard to admit that they are really capable of committing some of the sins prohibited in the section before us, and in other portions of the divine Volume. But we may rest assured that when God commands us not to commit this or that particular sin, we are verily capable of committing it. This is beyond all question. Divine wisdom would never erect a dam if there was not a current to be resisted. There would be no necessity to tell an angel not to steal; but man has theft in his nature, and hence the command applies to him. And just so in reference to every other prohibited thing; the prohibition proves the tendency — proves it beyond all question. We must either admit this or imply the positive blasphemy that God has spoken in vain.

But then it may be said; and is said by many, that while some very terrible samples of fallen humanity are capable of committing some of the abominable sins prohibited in scripture, yet all are not so. This is a most thorough mistake. Hear what the Holy Ghost says, in the seventeenth chapter of the prophet Jeremiah. "*The heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Whose heart is he speaking of? Is it the heart of some atrocious criminal, or of some untutored savage? Nay; it is the human heart, the heart of the writer and of the reader of these lines.

Hear also what our Lord Jesus Christ says on this subject. "Out of *the heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Out of what heart? Is it the heart of some hideously depraved and abominable wretch wholly unfit to appear in decent society? Nay; it is out of the human heart the heart of the writer and of the reader of these lines.

Let us never forget this; it is a wholesome truth for every one of us. We all need to bear in mind that if God were to withdraw His sustaining grace, for one moment, there is no depth of iniquity into which we are not capable of plunging; indeed, we may add — and we do it with deep thankfulness it is His own gracious hand that preserves us, each moment, from becoming a complete wreck, in every way, physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and in our circumstances. May we keep this ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts, so that we may walk humbly and watchfully, and lean upon that arm which alone can sustain and preserve us!

But, we have said, there is another valuable lesson furnished by this section of our book which now lies open before us. It teaches us, in a manner peculiar to itself, the marvellous way in which God provided for everything connected with His people. Nothing escaped His gracious notice; nothing was too trivial for His tender care. No mother could be more careful of the habits and manners of her little child, than the Almighty Creator and moral Governor of the universe was of the most minute details connected with the daily history of His people. By day and by night, waking and sleeping at home and abroad, He looked after them. Their clothing, their food, their manners and ways toward one another, how they were to build their houses, how they were to plough and sow their ground, how they were to carry themselves in the deepest privacy of their personal life — all was attended to and provided for in a manner that fills us with wonder, love and praise. We may here see, in a most striking way, that there is nothing too small for our God to take notice of when His people are concerned. He takes a loving, tender, fatherly interest in their most minute concerns. We are amazed to find the Most High God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Sustainer of the vast universe, condescending to legislate about the matter of a bird's nest; and yet why should we be amazed when we know that it is just the same to Him to provide for a sparrow as to feed a thousand millions of people daily?

But there was one grand fact which was ever to be kept prominently before each member of the congregation of Israel, namely, the divine presence in their midst. This fact was to govern their most private habits, and give character to all their ways. "The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up, thine enemies before thee; *therefore shall thy camp be holy*; that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." (Deut. 23: 14.)

What a precious privilege to have Jehovah walking in their midst! What a motive for purity of conduct, and refined delicacy in their persons and domestic habits! If He was in their midst to secure victory over their enemies, He was also there to demand holiness of life. They were never, for one moment, to forget the august Person who walked up and down in their midst. Would the thought of this be irksome to any? Only to such as did not love holiness, purity and moral order. Every true Israelite would delight in the thought of having One dwelling in their midst who could not endure ought that was unholy, unseemly or impure.

The Christian reader will be at no loss to seize the moral force and application of this holy principle. It is our privilege to have God the Spirit dwelling in us, individually and collectively. Thus we read, in 1 Corinthians 6: 19, "What! know ye not that *your body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" This is individual. Each believer is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and this most glorious and precious truth is the ground of the exhortation given in Ephesians 4: 30, "*Grieve* not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

How very important to keep this ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts! What a mighty moral motive for the diligent cultivation of purity of heart, and holiness of life! When tempted to indulge in any wrong current of thought or feeling, any unworthy manner of speech, any unseemly line of conduct, what a powerful corrective would be found in the realisation of the blessed fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in our body as in His temple! If only we could keep this ever before us it would preserve us from many a wandering thought, many an unguarded and foolish utterance, many an unbecoming act.

But, not only does the Holy Spirit dwell in each individual believer, He also dwells in the church collectively. "Know ye not that *ye are the temple of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth *in you*?" (1 Cor. 3: 16.) It is upon this fact that the apostle grounds his exhortation in 1 Thess 5: 19 "Quench not the Spirit." How divinely perfect is scripture! How blessedly it hangs together! The Holy Ghost dwells in us individually; hence we are not to grieve Him. He dwells in the assembly, hence we are not to quench Him, but give Him His right place, and allow full scope for His blessed operations. May these great practical truths find a deep place in our hearts, and exerts more powerful influence over our ways both in private life and in the public assembly!

We shall now proceed to quote a few passages from the section of our book which now lies open before us strikingly illustrative of the wisdom, goodness, tenderness, holiness and righteousness which marked all the dealings of God with His people of old. Take, for example, the very opening paragraph. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and *hide thyself from them*; thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found shalt thou do likewise; *thou mayest not hide thyself*. Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and *hide thyself from them*; thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again" (Deut. 22: 1-4)

Here the two lessons of which we have spoken are, very distinctly, presented. What a deeply humbling picture of the human heart have we in that one sentence, "Thou mayest not hide thyself!" We are capable of the base and detestable selfishness of hiding ourselves from our brother's claims upon our sympathy and succour — of shirking the holy duty of looking after his interests — of pretending not to see his real need of our aid. Such is man! Such is the writer!

But oh! how blessedly the character of our God shines out in this passage! The brother's ox, or his sheep, or his ass was not — to use a modern phrase — to be thrust into pound, for trespass; it was to be brought home, cared for, and restored, safe and sound, to the owner without charge for damage. And so with the raiment. How lovely is all this! How it breathes upon us the very air of the divine presence, the fragrant atmosphere of divine goodness, tenderness and thoughtful love! What a high and holy privilege for any people to have their conduct governed and their character formed by such exquisite statutes and judgements!

Again, take the following passage so beautifully illustrative of divine thoughtfulness: "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." The Lord would have His people thoughtful and considerate of others; and hence, in building their houses, they were not merely to think of themselves, and their convenience, but also of others and their safety.

Cannot Christians learn something from this? How prone we are to think only of ourselves, our own interests, our own comfort and convenience! How rarely it happens that, in the building or furnishing of our houses, we bestow a thought upon other people! We build and furnish for ourselves; alas! self is too much our object and motive spring in all our undertakings; nor can it be otherwise unless the heart be kept under the governing power of those motives and objects which belong to Christianity. We must live in the pure and heavenly atmosphere of the new creation, in order to get above and beyond the base selfishness which characterizes fallen humanity. Every unconverted man woman and child on the face of the earth is governed simply by self, in some shape or another. Self is the centre, the object, the motive-spring of every action.

True, some are more amiable, more affectionate, more benevolent, more unselfish, more disinterested, more agreeable than others; but it is utterly impossible that "the natural man" can be governed by spiritual motives, or an earthly man be animated by heavenly objects. Alas! We have to confess, with shame and sorrow, that we who profess to be heavenly and spiritual are so prone to live for ourselves, to seek our own things, to maintain our own interests, to consult our own ease and convenience. We are all alive and on the alert when self, in any shape or form, is concerned.

All this is most sad and deeply humbling. It really ought not to be, and it would not be if we were looking more simply and earnestly to Christ as our great Exemplar and model in all things. Earnest and constant occupation of heart with Christ is the true secret of all practical Christianity. It is not rules and regulations that will ever make us Christ-like in our spirit, manner and ways. We must drink into His spirit, walk in His footsteps, dwell more profoundly upon His moral glories, and then we shall, of blessed necessity, be conformed to His image. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass [or mirror *katoptrizomenoi*.] the glory, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the, Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3.)

We must now ask the reader to turn, for a moment, to the following very important practical instructions — full of suggestive power for all Christian workers "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with *divers seeds*, lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard be defiled." (Deut. 22: 9.)

What a weighty principle is here! Do we really understand it? Do we see its true spiritual application? It is to be feared there is a terrible amount of "mingled seed" used in the so-called spiritual husbandry of the present day. How much of "philosophy and vain deceit," how much of "science falsely so called," how much of "the rudiments of the world" do we find mixed up in the teaching and preaching throughout the length and breadth of the professing church! How little of the pure, unadulterated seed of the word of God, the "incorruptible seed" of the precious gospel of Christ, is scattered broadcast over the field of Christendom, in this our day! How few, comparatively, are content to confine themselves within the covers of the Bible for the material of their ministry! Those who are, by the grace of God faithful enough to do so, are looked upon as men of one idea, men of the old school, narrow and behind the times.

Well, we can only say, with a full and glowing heart, God bless the men of one idea, men of the precious old school of apostolic preaching! Most heartily do we congratulate them on their blessed narrowness, and their being behind these dark and infidel times. We are fully aware of what we expose ourselves to in thus writing; but this does not move us. We are persuaded that every true servant of Christ must be a man of one idea, and that idea is Christ; he must belong to the very oldest school, the school of Christ; he must be as narrow as the truth of God; and he must, with stern decision, refuse to move one hair's breadth in the direction of this infidel age. We cannot shake off the conviction that the effort on the part of the preachers and teachers of Christendom to keep abreast of the literature of the day must, to a very large extent, account for the rapid advance of rationalism and infidelity. They have got away from the holy scriptures, and sought to adorn their ministry by the resources of philosophy, science and literature. They have catered more for the intellect than for the heart and conscience. The pure and precious doctrines of holy scripture, the sincere milk of the word, the gospel of the grace of God and of the glory of Christ, were found insufficient to attract and keep together large congregations. As Israel of old despised the manna, got tired of it, and pronounced it light food, so the professing church grew weary of the pure doctrines of that glorious Christianity unfolded in the pages of the New Testament, and sighed for something to gratify the intellect, and feed the imagination. The doctrines of the cross, in which the blessed apostle gloried, have lost their charm for the professing church, and any who would be faithful enough to adhere and confine themselves in their ministry to those doctrines might abandon all thought of popularity.

But let all the true and faithful ministers of Christ, all true workers in His vineyard apply their hearts to the spiritual principle set forth in Deuteronomy 22: 9; let them, with unflinching decision, refuse to make use of "divers seeds" in their spiritual husbandry; let them confine themselves in their ministry to "the form of sound words," and ever seek "rightly to divide the word of truth," that so: they may not be ashamed of their work, but receive a full reward in that day when every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is. We may depend upon it, the word of God — the pure seed — is the only proper material for the spiritual workman to use. We do not despise learning; far from it, we consider it most valuable in its right place. The facts of science, too, and the resources of sound philosophy may all be turned to profitable account in unfolding and illustrating the truth of holy scripture. We find the blessed Master Himself and His inspired apostles making use of the facts of history and of nature in their public teaching; and who in his sober senses, would think of calling in question the value and importance of a competent knowledge of the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, in the private study and public exposition of the word of God?

But admitting all this, as we most fully do, it leaves wholly untouched the great practical principle before us—a principle to which all the Lord's people and His servants are bound to adhere, namely, that the Holy Ghost is the only power, and holy scripture the only material for all true ministry

in the gospel and the church of God. If this were more fully understood and faithfully acted upon, we should witness a very different condition of things throughout the length and breadth of the vineyard of Christ.

Here, however, we must close this section. We have elsewhere sought to handle the subject of "The Unequal Yoke," and shall not therefore dwell upon it here.* The Israelite was not to plow with an ox and an ass together; neither was he to wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen. The spiritual application of both these things is as simple as it is important. The Christian is not to link himself with an unbeliever, for any object whatsoever, be it domestic, religious, philanthropic, or commercial, neither must he allow himself to be governed by mixed principles. His character must be formed and his conduct ruled by the pure and lofty principles of the word of God. Thus may it be with all who profess and call themselves Christians.

{*See a pamphlet entitled, "The Unequal Yoke."}

Deuteronomy 26.

"And it shall be, *when thou shalt come in* unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and *possessest* it, and *dwestest* therein; that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto *the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there*" — not to a place of their own or others' choosing — "And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God." (Vers. 1-4.)

The chapter on which we now enter contains the lovely ordinance of the basket of firstfruits in which we shall find some principles of the deepest interest, and practical importance. It was when the hand of Jehovah had conducted His people into the land of promise, that the fruits of that land could be presented. It was, obviously, necessary to be in Canaan, ere Canaan's fruits could be offered in worship. The worshipper was able to say, "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us."

Here lay the root of the matter. "*I am come.*" He does not say, "I am coming, hoping to come, or longing to come." No; but, "I am come." Thus it must ever be. We must know ourselves saved, ere we can offer the fruits of a known salvation. We may be most sincere in our desires after salvation, most earnest in our efforts to obtain it. But then we cannot but see that efforts to be saved, and the fruits of a known and enjoyed salvation are wholly different. The Israelite did not offer the basket of firstfruits in order to get into the land, but because he was actually in it. "I profess this day, that I am come." "There is no mistake about it, no question, no doubt, not even a hope. I am actually in the land, and here is the fruit of it."

"And thou shalt speak, and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders; and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God.

And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you."

This is a very beautiful illustration of worship. "A Syrian ready to perish." Such was the origin. There is nothing to boast of, so far as nature is concerned. And as to the condition in which grace had found them; what of it? Hard bondage in the land of Egypt. Toiling amid the brick kilns, beneath the cruel lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. But then, "We cried unto Jehovah." Here was their sure and blessed resource. It was all they could do; but it was enough. That cry of helplessness went directly up to the throne and to the heart of God, and brought Him down into the very midst of the brick kilns of Egypt. Hear Jehovah's gracious words to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters; for *I know their sorrows*; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.... Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them." (Ex. 3: 7-9.)

Such was the immediate response of Jehovah to the cry of His people. "I am come down to deliver them." Yes; blessed be His Name, He came down, in the exercise of His own free and sovereign grace, to deliver His people; and no power of men or devils, earth or hell, could hold them for one moment beyond the appointed time. Hence, in our chapter, we have the grand result as set forth in the language of the worshipper, and in the contents of his basket. I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us.... And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me." The Lord had accomplished all, according to the love of His heart, and the faithfulness of His word. Not one jot or tittle had failed. "I am come." And "I have brought the fruit." The fruit of what? Of Egypt? Nay; but "of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me." The worshipper's lips proclaimed the completeness of Jehovah's work. The worshipper's basket contained the fruit of Jehovah's land. Nothing could be simpler, nothing more real. There was no room for a doubt, no ground for a question. He had simply to declare Jehovah's work and show the fruit. It was all of God from first to last. He had brought them out of Egypt, and He had brought them into Canaan. He had filled their baskets with the mellow fruits of His land, and their hearts with His Praise.

And now, beloved reader, let us just ask you, do you think it was presumption on the part of the Israelite to speak as he did? Was it right, was it modest, was it humble of him to say "*I am come*"? Would it have been more becoming in him merely to give expression to the faint hope that, at some future period, he might come? Would doubt and hesitation, as to his position and his portion, have been more honouring and gratifying to the God of Israel? What say you? It may be that, anticipating our argument, you are ready to say, "There is no analogy." Why not? If an Israelite could say, "I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us," why cannot the believer now say, "I am come unto Jesus"? True, in the one case, it was sight; in the other, it is faith. But is the latter less real than the former? Does not the inspired apostle say to the Hebrews, "*Ye are come* unto mount Zion"? And again, "*We receiving* a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear." If we are in doubt as to whether we have "come" or not, and as to whether we have "received the kingdom" or not, it is impossible to worship in truth, or serve with acceptance. It is when we are in intelligent and peaceful possession of the place and portion in Christ, that true worship can ascend to the throne above, and effective service be rendered in the vineyard below.

For what, let us ask, is true worship? It is simply telling out, in the presence of God, what He is, and what He has done. It is the heart occupied with, and delighting in God and in all His marvellous

actings and ways. Now, if we have no knowledge of God, and no faith in what He has done, how can we worship Him? "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But, then, to know God is life eternal. I cannot worship God if I do not know Him; and I cannot know Him without having eternal life. The Athenians had erected an altar "to the unknown God," and Paul told them that they were worshipping in ignorance, and proceeded to declare unto them the true God as revealed in the Person and work of the Man Christ Jesus.

It is deeply important to be clear as to this. I must know God ere I can worship Him. I may "feel after him, if haply I may find him;" but feeling after One whom I have not found, and worshipping and delighting in One whom I have found, are two totally different things. God has revealed Himself, blessed be His Name! He has given us the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He has come near to us in the Person of that blessed One, so that we may know Him, love Him, trust in Him, delight in Him, and use Him, in all our weakness and in all our need. We have no longer to grope for Him amid the darkness of nature, nor yet among the clouds and mists of spurious religion, in its ten thousand forms. No; our God has made Himself known by a revelation so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool in all beside, may not err therein. The Christian can say, "*I know* whom I have believed." This is the basis of all true worship. There may be a vast amount of fleshly pietism, mechanical religion, and ceremonial routine, without a single atom of true spiritual worship. This latter can only flow from the knowledge of God.

But our object is not to write a treatise on worship, but simply to unfold to our readers the instructive and beautiful ordinance of the basket of firstfruits And having shown that worship was the first thing with an Israelite who found himself in possession of the land — and, further, that we, now, must know our place and privilege in Christ before we can truthfully and intelligently worship the Father — we shall proceed to point out another very important practical result illustrated in our chapter, namely, *active benevolence*.

"When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments, which thou hast commanded me; I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them." (Vers. 12, 13.)

Nothing can be more beautiful than the moral order of these things. It is precisely similar to what we have in Hebrews 13. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is *the fruit* of our lips giving thanks to his name." Here is the worship. "But to do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Here is the active benevolence. Putting both together, we have what we may call the upper and the nether side of the Christian's character — praising God and doing good to men. Precious characteristics! May we exhibit them more faithfully! One thing is certain, they will always go together. Show us a man whose heart is full of praise to God, and we will show you one whose heart is open to every form of human need. He may not be rich in this world's goods. He may be obliged to say, like one of old who was not ashamed to say it, "Silver and gold have I none, but he will have the tear of sympathy, the kindly look, the soothing word, and these things tell far more powerfully upon a sensitive heart than the opening of the purse-strings, and the jingling of silver and gold. Our adorable Lord and Master, our Great Exemplar, "went about doing good;" but we never read of His giving money to any one; indeed, we are warranted in believing that the Blessed One never possessed a penny. When He wanted to answer the Herodians on the subject of

paying tribute to Caesar, He had to ask them to show Him a penny; and when asked to pay tribute, He sent Peter to the sea to get it. He never carried money; and, most assuredly, money is not named in the category of gifts bestowed by Him upon His servants. Still He went about doing good, and we are to do the same, in our little measure; it is, at once, our high privilege and our bounden duty to do so.

And let the reader mark the divine order laid down in Hebrews 13 and illustrated in Deuteronomy 26. Worship gets the first, the highest place. Let us never forget this. We, in our wisdom or our sentimentality, might imagine that doing good to men, usefulness, philanthropy is the highest thing. But it is not so. "Whoso offereth *praise* glorifieth me." God inhabits the praises of His people. He delights to surround Himself with hearts filled to overflowing with a sense of His goodness, His greatness and His glory. Hence, we are to offer the sacrifice of praise to God "continually." So also the Psalmist says, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth." It is not merely now and then, or when all is bright and cheery around us, when everything goes on smoothly and prosperously; no, but "*at all times*" — "*continually*" The stream of thanksgiving is to flow uninterrupted. There is no interval for murmuring or complaining, fretfulness or dissatisfaction, gloom or despondency. Praise and thanksgiving are to be our continual occupation. We are ever to cultivate the spirit of worship. Every breath, as it were, ought to be a hallelujah. Thus it shall be, by-and-by. Praise will be our happy and holy service while eternity rolls along its course of golden ages. When we shall have no further call to "communicate," no demand on our resources or our sympathies, when we shall have bid an eternal adieu to this scene of sorrow and need, death and desolation, then shall we praise our God, for evermore, without let or interruption, in the sanctuary of His own blessed presence above.

"But to do good and to communicate, *forget not.*" There is singular interest attaching to the mode in which this is put. He does not say, "But to offer the sacrifice of praise, forget not." No; but lest, in the full and happy enjoyment of our own place and portion in Christ, we should "forget" that we are passing through a scene of want and misery, trial and pressure, the apostle adds the salutary and much needed admonition as to doing good and communicating. The spiritual Israelite is not only to rejoice in every good thing which the Lord his God has bestowed upon him, but he is also to remember the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow — that is, the one who has no earthly portion and is thoroughly devoted to the Lord's work; and the one who has no home, the one who has no natural protector, and the one who has no earthly stay. It must ever be thus. The rich tide of grace rolls down from the bosom of God, fills our hearts to overflowing, and, in its overflow, refreshes and gladdens our whole sphere of action. If we were only living in the enjoyment of what is ours in God, our every movement, our every act, our every word, yea, our every look would do good. The Christian, according to the divine idea, is one who stands, with one hand lifted up to God, in the presentation of the sacrifice of praise, and the other hand filled with the fragrant fruits of genuine benevolence to meet every form of human need.

O beloved reader, let us deeply ponder these things. Let us really apply our whole hearts to the earnest consideration of them. Let us seek a fuller realisation and a truer expression of these two great branches of practical Christianity, and not be satisfied with anything less.

We shall now briefly glance at the third point in the precious chapter before us. We shall do little more than quote the passage for the reader. The Israelite, having presented his basket, and distributed his tithes, was further instructed to say, "I have not eaten thereof in my *mourning*, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the *dead*; but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey. This day the Lord

thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgements; thou shalt therefore *keep* and *do* them, *with all thine heart* and *with all thy soul*. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to *walk in his ways*, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgements, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people" — that is a people of His own special possession — "as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest *be an holy people* unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken." (Vers. 14-19.)

Here we have personal holiness, practical sanctification, entire separation from everything inconsistent with the holy place and relationship into which they had been introduced, in the sovereign grace and mercy of God. There must be no mourning, no uncleanness, no dead works. We have no room, no time for any such things as these; they do not belong to that blessed sphere in which we are privileged to live and move and have our being. We have just three things to do; we look up to God, and offer the sacrifice of praise. We look around at a needy world, and do good. We look in upon the circle of our own being — our inner life, and seek, by grace, to keep ourselves unspotted. "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1: 27)

Thus, whether we hearken to Moses, in Deuteronomy 26, or to Paul in Hebrews 13, or to James in his most wholesome, needed, practical epistle, it is the same Spirit that speaks to us, and the same grand lessons that are impressed upon us — lessons of unspeakable value and moral importance — lessons loudly called for, in this day of easygoing profession, in the which the doctrines of grace are taken up and held in a merely intellectual way, and connected with all sorts of worldliness and self-indulgence.

Truly there is an urgent need of a more powerful, practical ministry amongst us. There is a deplorable lack of the prophetic and pastoral element in our ministrations. By the Prophetic element we mean that character of ministry that deals with the conscience and brings it into the immediate presence of God. This is *greatly* needed. There is a good deal of ministry which addresses itself to the intelligence; but sadly too little for the heart and the conscience. The teacher speaks to the understanding; the prophet speaks to the conscience;* the pastor speaks to the heart. We speak, of course, generally. It may so happen that the three elements are found in the ministry of one man; but they are distinct; and we cannot but feel that where the prophetic and Pastoral gifts are lacking in any assembly the teachers should very earnestly wait upon the Lord for spiritual power to deal with the hearts and consciences of His beloved people. Blessed be His Name, He has all needed gift, grace and power for His servants. All we need is to wait on Him, in real earnestness and sincerity of heart, and He will, most assuredly, supply us with all suited grace and moral fitness for whatever service we may be called to render in His church.

{*Very many seem to entertain the idea that a prophet is one who foretells future events; but it would be a mistake thus to confine the term. 1 Cor 14: 28-32 lets us into the meaning of the words "prophet" and "prophesying." The teacher and the prophet are closely and beautifully connected. The teacher unfolds truth from the word of God; the prophet applies it to the conscience; and, we may add, the pastor sees how the ministry of both the one and the other is acting on the heart and in the life.}

Oh! that all the Lord's servants may be stirred up to a more deep-toned earnestness, in every department of His blessed work! May we be "instant in season, out of season," and in no wise discouraged by the condition of things around us, but rather find, in the very condition, an urgent

reason for more intense devotedness.

Deuteronomy 27.

"And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster; and thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee. Therefore it shall be, when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster. And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones; and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy God; and thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the Lord thy God. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly. And Moses, and the priests the Levites, spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; *this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God* Thou shalt *therefore* obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day. And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, These shall stand upon mount Gerazim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin. And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali." (Vers. 1-13.)

There could not be a more striking contrast than that which is presented in the opening and close of this chapter. In the paragraph which we have just penned, we see Israel entering upon the land of promise — that fair and fruitful land, flowing with milk and honey, and there erecting an altar in mount Ebal, for burnt offerings and peace offerings. We read nothing about sin offerings or trespass offerings here. The law, in all its fullness, was to be "written very plainly," upon the plastered stones, and the people, in full, recognised, covenant relationship, were to offer on the altar those special offerings of sweet savour, so blessedly expressive of worship and holy communion. The subject here is not the trespasser *in act*, or the sinner *in nature*, approaching the brazen altar, with a trespass offering or a sin offering; but rather a people fully delivered, accepted and blessed — a people in the actual enjoyment of their relationship and their inheritance.

True, they were trespassers and sinners; and, as such, needed the precious provision of the brazen altar. This, of course, is obvious, and fully understood and admitted by every one taught of God; but it manifestly is not the subject of Deuteronomy 27: 1-13, and the spiritual reader will, at once, perceive the reason. When we see the Israel of God, in full covenant relationship, entering into possession of their inheritance, having the revealed will of their covenant God Jehovah, plainly and fully written before them, and the milk and honey flowing around them, we must conclude that all question as to trespasses and sins is definitively settled, and that nothing remains for a people so highly privileged and so richly blessed, but to surround the altar of their covenant God, and present those sweet savour offering which mere acceptable to Him and suited to them.

In short, the whole scene unfolded to our view in the first half of our chapter is perfectly beautiful. Israel having avouched Jehovah to be their God, and Jehovah having avouched Israel to be His peculiar people, to make them high above all nations which He had made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and an holy people unto the Lord their God, as He had spoken — Israel thus privileged, blessed and exalted, in full possession of the goodly land, and having all the precious commandments

of God before their eyes, what remained, but to present the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, in holy worship and happy fellowship?

But, in the latter half of our chapter, we find something quite different. Moses appoints six tribes to stand upon mount Gerazim, to bless the people; and six on mount Ebal to curse; but alas! when we come to the actual history, the positive facts of the case, there is not a single syllable of blessing? nothing but twelve awful curses each confirmed by a solemn "amen" from the whole congregation.

What a sad change! What a striking contrast! It reminds us of what passed before us in our study of Exodus 19. There could not be a more impressive commentary on the words of the inspired apostle in Galatians 3: 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law" — as many as are on that ground — "are under the curse: for it is; written" — and here he quotes Deuteronomy 27 — "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Here we have the real solution of the question. Israel, as to their actual moral condition, were on the ground of law; and hence, although the opening of our chapter presents a lovely picture of God's thoughts respecting Israel, yet the close of it sets forth the sad and humiliating result of Israel's real state before God. There is not a sound from mount Gerazim, not one word of benediction; but, instead thereof, curse upon curse falls on the ears of the people.

Nor could it possibly be otherwise. Let people contend for it as they will, nothing but a curse can come upon "as many as are of the works of the law. It does not merely say, "as many as fail to keep the law," though that is true; but, as if to set the truth in the very clearest and most forcible manner before us, the Holy Ghost declares that for *all*, no matter who, Jew, Gentile or nominal Christian — all who are on the ground or principle of works of law, there is, and can be, nothing but a curse. Thus, then, the reader will be able, intelligently, to account for the profound silence that reigned on mount Gerazim, in the day of Deuteronomy 27. The simple fact is, if one solitary benediction had been heard, it would have been a contradiction to the entire teaching of holy scripture on the question of law.

We have so fully gone into the weighty subject of the law, in the first volume of these Notes, that we do not feel called upon to dwell upon it here. We can only say that the more we study scripture, and the more we ponder the law-question in the light of the New Testament, the more amazed we are at the manner in which some persist in contending for the opinion that Christians are under the law, whether for life, for righteousness, for holiness, or for any object whatsoever. How can such an opinion stand for a moment in the face of that magnificent and conclusive statement in Romans 6: "YE ARE NOT UNDER LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE?"

Deuteronomy 28.

In approaching the study of this remarkable section of our book, the reader must bear in mind that it is by no means, to be confounded with chapter 27. Some expositors, in seeking to account for the absence of the blessings in the latter, have sought for them here. But it is a grand mistake — a mistake absolutely fatal to the proper understanding of either chapter. The obvious fact is, the two chapters are wholly distinct, in basis, scope and practical application. Chapter 27 is — to put it as pointedly and briefly as possible — *moral* and *personal*. Chapter 28 is *dispensational* and *national*. That deals with the great root principle of man's moral condition, as a sinner utterly ruined and wholly incapable of meeting God on the ground of law; this, on the other hand, takes up the question of Israel as a nation, under the government of God. In short, a careful comparison of the two chapters will enable the reader to see their entire distinctness. For instance, what connection can we trace between the six blessings of our chapter and the twelve curses of chapter 27? None whatever. It is not possible to establish the slightest relationship. But a child can see the moral link between the blessings and curses of chapter 28.

Let us quote a passage or two in proof. "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt *hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God*" — the grand old Deuteronomic motto, the key note of the book — "to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth; and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, *if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God*" — the only safeguard, the true secret of happiness, security, victory and strength — Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out."

Is it not perfectly plain to the reader that these are not the blessings pronounced by the six tribes on mount Gerazim? What is here presented to us is Israel's national dignity, prosperity, and glory founded upon their diligent attention to all the commandments set before them in this book. It was the eternal purpose of God that Israel should be pre-eminent on the earth, high above all the nations. This purpose shall, assuredly, be made good although Israel, in the past, have shamefully failed to render that perfect obedience which was to form the basis of their national pre-eminence and glory.

We must never forget or surrender this great truth. Some expositors have adopted a system of interpretation by which the covenant blessings of Israel are spiritualised and made over to the church of God. This is a most fatal mistake. Indeed, it is hardly possible to set forth in language, or even to conceive the pernicious effects of such a method of handling the precious word of God. Nothing is more certain than that it is diametrically opposed to the mind and will of God. He will not and cannot sanction such tampering with His truth, or such an unwarrantable alienation of the blessings and privileges of His people Israel.

True, we read, in Galatians 3. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive" — what? Blessings in the city and in the field? Blessings in our basket and store? Nay; but "the promise of the Spirit through faith." So also we learn, from the same epistle, in Galatians 4, that restored Israel will be permitted to reckon amongst her children all those who are born of the Spirit, during the Christian period. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband."

All this is blessedly true; but it affords no warrant whatever for transferring the promises made to Israel to New Testament believers. God has pledged Himself, by an oath, to bless the seed of Abraham His friend — to bless them with all earthly blessings, This promise holds good and is absolutely inalienable. Woe be to all who attempt in the land of Canaan. to interfere with its literal fulfilment, in God's own time. We have referred to this in our studies on the earlier part of this book, and must now rest content with warning the reader, most solemnly, against every system of interpretation which involves such serious consequences as to the word and ways of God. We must ever remember that Israel's blessings are earthly; the church's blessings are heavenly. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.*"

Thus, both the nature and the sphere of the church's blessings are wholly different from those of Israel, and must never be confounded. But the system of interpretation above referred to does confound them, to the marring of the integrity of holy scripture, and the serious damage of souls. To attempt to apply the promises made to Israel to the church of God, either now or hereafter, on earth or in heaven, is to turn things completely upside down, and to produce the most hopeless confusion in the exposition and application of scripture. we feel called upon, in simple faithfulness to the word of God, and to the

soul of the reader, to press this matter upon his earnest attention. He may rest assured it is, by no means, an unimportant question; so far from this, we are persuaded that it is utterly impossible for any one who confounds Israel and the church, the earthly and the heavenly, to be a sound or accurate interpreter of the word of God.

However, we cannot pursue this subject further here. we only trust that the Spirit of God will arouse the heart of the reader to feel its interest and importance, and give him to see the necessity of rightly dividing the word of truth. If this be so, our object will be fully gained.

With regard to this twenty-eighth of Deuteronomy, if the reader only seizes the fact of its entire distinctness from its predecessor, he will be able to read it with spiritual intelligence and real profit. There is no need whatever for elaborate exposition. It divides itself naturally and obviously into two parts. In the first, we have a full and most blessed statement of the results of obedience. (See verses 1-15.) In the second, we have a deeply solemn and affecting statement of the awful consequences of disobedience. (See verses 16-68.) And we cannot but be struck with the fact that the section continuing the curses is more than three times the length of the one containing the blessings. That consists of fifteen verses; this of fifty-three. The whole chapter furnishes an impressive commentary on the government of God, and a most forcible illustration of the fact that "our God is a consuming fire." All the nations of the earth may learn from Israel's marvellous history, that God must punish disobedience, and that, too, first of all, in His own. And if He has not spared His own people, what shall be the end of those who know Him not "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It is the very height of extravagant folly for any one to attempt to evade the full force of such passages, or to explain them away. It cannot be done. Let any one read the chapter before us and compare it with the actual history of Israel, and he will see that as sure as there is a God on the throne of the majesty in the heavens, so surely will He punish evildoers, both here and hereafter. It cannot be otherwise. The government that could or would allow evil to go unjudged, uncondemned, unpunished, would not be a perfect government, would not be the government of God. It is vain to found arguments upon one-sided views of the goodness, kindness and mercy of God. Blessed be His Name, He is kind and good and merciful and gracious, long-suffering and full of compassion. But He is holy and just, righteous and true; and "he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world [the habitable earth, *oikoumenen*] in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance [given proof, *pistin*] unto all, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17.)

However, we must draw this section to a close; but, ere doing so, we feel it to be our duty to call the reader's attention to a very interesting point in connection with verse 13 of our chapter. "The Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them." This, no doubt, refers to Israel as a nation. They are destined to be the head of all the nations of the earth. Such is the sure and settled purpose and counsel of God respecting them. Low as they are now sunk, scattered and lost amongst the nations, suffering the terrible consequences of their persistent disobedience, sleeping, as we read in Daniel 12, in the dust of the earth; yet they shall, *as a nation*, arise and shine in far brighter glory than that of Solomon.

All this is blessedly true, and established, beyond all question, in manifold passages in Moses, the Psalms, the prophets and the New Testament. But, in looking: through the history of Israel, we find some very striking instances of individuals who were permitted and enabled, through infinite grace, to make their own of the precious promise contained in verse 13, and that too in very dark and depressing periods of the national history, when Israel, as a nation, was the tail and not the head. We shall just give

the reader an instance or two, not only to illustrate our point, but also to set before him a principle of immense practical importance and universal application.

Let us turn, for a moment, to that charming little book of Esther — a book so little understood or appreciated — a book which, we may truly say, fills a niche and teaches a lesson which no other book does. It belongs to a period when, most assuredly, Israel was not the head, but the tail; but, notwithstanding, it presents to our view the very edifying and encouraging picture of an individual son of Abraham so carrying himself as to reach the very highest position, and gaining a splendid victory over Israel's bitterest foe.

As to Israel's condition, in the days of Esther, it was such that God could not publicly own them. Hence it is that His name is not found in the book, from beginning to end. The Gentile was the head and Israel the tail. the relationship between Jehovah and Israel could no longer be publicly owned; but the heart of Jehovah could never forget His people; and we may add, the heart of a faithful Israelite could never forget Jehovah or His holy law; and these are just the two facts that specially characterise this most interesting little book. God was acting for Israel behind the scenes, and Mordecai was acting for God before the scenes. It is worthy of remark that neither Israel's best Friend, nor their worst enemy, is once named in the book of Esther; and yet the whole book is full of the actings of both. The finger of God is stamped on every link in the marvellous chain of providence; and, on the other hand, the bitter enmity Of Amalek come out in the cruel plot of the haughty Agagite.

All this is intensely interesting. Indeed, in rising from the study of this book, we may well say, "Oh! scenes surpassing fable and yet true." No romance could possibly exceed in interest this simple but most blessed history. But we must not expatiate, much as we should like to do so. time and space forbid. We merely refer to it now in order to point out to the reader the unspeakable value and importance of individual faithfulness, at a moment when the national glory was faded and gone. Mordecai stood like a rock for the truth of God. He refused with stern decision, to own Amalek. He would save the life of Ahasuerus and bow to his authority as the expression of the power of God; but he would not bow to Haman. His conduct, in this matter, was governed simply by the word of God. The authority for his course was to be found in this blessed book of Deuteronomy. *Remember* what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and *he feared not God*" — here was the true secret of the whole matter — "therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; *thou shalt not forget it.*" (Deut. 25: 17-19.)

This was distinct enough for every circumcised ear, every obedient heart, every upright conscience. Equally distinct is the language of Exodus 17. "And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-nissi [the Lord my banner]: for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Vers. 14-16.)

Here then was Mordecai's authority for refusing a single nod of his head to the Agagite. How could a faithful member of the house of Israel bow to a member of a house with which Jehovah was at war? Impossible. He could clothe himself in sackcloth, fast and weep for his people, but he could not, he would not, he dare not bow to an Amalekite. He might be charged with presumption, blind obstinacy, stupid bigotry, and contemptible narrow-mindedness; but with that he had nothing whatever

to do. It might seem the most unaccountable folly to withhold the common mark of respect from the highest noble in the kingdom; but that noble was an Amalekite, and that was enough for Mordecai. The apparent folly was simple obedience.

It is this which makes the case so interesting and important for us. Nothing can ever do away with our responsibility to obey the word of God. It might be said to Mordecai that the commandment as to Amalek was a bygone thing, having reference to Israel's palmy days. It was quite right for Joshua to fight with Amalek; Saul, too, ought to have obeyed the word of Jehovah instead of sparing Agag; but now all was changed; the glory was departed from Israel, and it was perfectly useless to attempt to act on Exodus 17 or Deuteronomy 27.

All such arguments, we feel assured, would have no weight whatever with Mordecai. It was enough for him that Jehovah had said, "*Remember what Amalek did.... Thou shalt not forget it.*" How long was this to hold good? "From generation to generation. Jehovah's war with Amalek was never to cease until his very name and remembrance were blotted out from under heaven. And why? Because of his cruel and heartless treatment of Israel. Such was the kindness of God toward His people! How then could a faithful Israelite ever bow to an Amalekite? Impossible. Could Joshua bow to Amalek? Nay. Did Samuel? Nay; "he hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." How then could Mordecai bow to him? He could not do it, cost what it might. It mattered not to him that the gallows was erected for him. He could be hanged, but he could never do homage to Amalek.

And what was the result? A magnificent triumph! There stood the proud Amalekite near the throne, basking in the sunshine of royal favour, boasting himself in his riches, his greatness, his glory, and about to crush beneath his foot the seed of Abraham. There, on the other hand, lay poor Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes and tears. What could he do? He could obey. He had neither sword nor spear; but he had the word of God, and by simply obeying that word, he gained a victory over Amalek quite as decisive and splendid in its way, as that gained by Joshua, in Exodus 17 — a victory which Saul failed to gain, though surrounded by a host of warriors selected from the twelve tribes of Israel. Amalek sought to get Mordecai hanged; but instead of that he was obliged to act as his footman, and conduct him in all but regal pomp and splendour through the street of the city. "And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning and having his head covered."

Here, assuredly Israel was the head and Amalek the tail — Israel, not nationally but individually. But this was only the beginning of Amalek's defeat and of Israel's glory. Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had erected for Mordecai, "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad."

Nor was this all. The effect of Mordecai's marvellous victory was felt far and wide over the

hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire. "In every province, and in every city whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." And, to crown all, we read that "Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."

Now, reader, does not all this prove to us, in the most striking manner, the immense importance of individual faithfulness? Is it not eminently calculated to encourage us to stand for the truth of God, cost what it may? Only see what marvellous results followed from the actings of one man! Many might have condemned Mordecai's conduct. It might have seemed like unaccountable obstinacy to refuse a simple mark of respect to the highest noble in the empire. But it was not so. It was simple obedience. It was decision for God, and it led to a most magnificent victory, the spoils of which were reaped by his brethren at the very ends of the earth.

For further illustration of the subject suggested by Deuteronomy 28: 13, we must refer the reader to Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 there he will see what morally glorious results can be reached by individual faithfulness to the true God, at a moment when Israel's national glory was gone; their city and temple in ruins. The three worthies refused to worship the golden image. They dared to face the wrath of the king, to withstand the universal voice of the empire, yea, to meet the fiery furnace itself, rather than disobey. They could surrender life, but they could not surrender the truth of God.

And what was the result? A splendid victory! They walked through the furnace with the Son of God, and were called forth from the furnace as witnesses and servants of the Most High God. Glorious privilege! Wondrous dignity! And all the simple result of obedience. Had they gone with the crowd, and bowed the head in worship to the national god, in order to escape the dreadful furnace, see what they would have lost! But, blessed be God, they were enabled to stand fast in the confession of the grand foundation truth of the unity of the Godhead — that truth which had been trampled under foot amid the splendours of Solomon's reign; and the record of their faithfulness has been penned for us by the Holy Spirit, in order to encourage us to tread, with firm step, the path of individual devotedness, in the face of a God-hating, Christ-rejecting world, and in the face of a truth-neglecting Christendom. It is impossible to read the narrative and not have our whole renewed being stirred up and drawn out in earnest desire for more deep-toned personal devotedness to Christ and His precious cause.

Similar must be the effect produced by the study of Daniel 6. We cannot allow ourselves to quote or expatiate. We can only commend the soul-stirring record to the attention of the reader. It is uncommonly fine, and it furnishes a splendid lesson for this day of soft, self-indulgent, easy-going profession, in which it costs people nothing to give a nominal assent to the truths of Christianity; but in which, notwithstanding, there is so little desire or readiness to follow, with whole-hearted decision, a rejected Lord, or to yield an unqualified and unhesitating obedience to His commandments.

How refreshing, in the face of so much heartless indifference, to read of the faithfulness of Daniel! He, with unflinching decision, persisted in his holy habit of praying three times a day, with his window open toward Jerusalem, although he knew that the den of lions was the penalty of his act. He might have closed his window and drawn his curtains and retired into the privacy of his chamber to pray, or he might have waited for the midnight hour when no human eye could see, or human ear hear him. But no; this beloved servant of God would not hide his light under a bed or a bushel. There was a great principle at stake. It was not merely that he would pray to the one living and true God, but he would pray with "*his windows open towards Jerusalem.*" And why "toward Jerusalem"? Because it was God's centre. But it was in ruins. True, for the present and as looked at from a human standpoint. But to

faith, and from a divine standpoint, Jerusalem was God's centre for His earthly people. It was and it shall be, beyond all question. And not only so, but its dust is precious to Jehovah; and hence Daniel was in full communion with the mind of God when he opened his windows toward Jerusalem and prayed. He had scripture for what he did, as the reader may see by referring to 2 Chronicles 6. "If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray *toward their land*, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward the city* which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name."

Here was Daniel's warrant. This was what he did, utterly regardless of human opinions; and utterly regardless, too, of pains and penalties. He would rather be thrown into the den of lions than surrender the truth of God. He would rather go to heaven with a good conscience than remain on earth with a bad one.

And what was the result? Another splendid triumph! "Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN HIS GOD."

Blessed servant! Noble witness! Assuredly he was the head, on this occasion, and his enemies the tail. And how? Simply by obedience to the word of God. This is what we deem to be of such vast moral importance for this our day. It is to illustrate and enforce this that we refer to those brilliant examples of individual faithfulness at a time when Israel's national glory was in the dust, their unity gone and their polity broken up. We cannot but regard it as a fact full of interest, full of encouragement, full of suggestive power, that in the darkest days of Israel's history as a nation we have the brightest and noblest examples of personal faith and devotedness. We earnestly press this upon the attention of the Christian reader. We consider it eminently calculated to strengthen and cheer up our hearts in standing for the truth of God at a moment like the present, when there is so much to discourage us in the general condition of the professing church. It is not that we are to look for such speedy, striking and splendid results as were realised in those cases to which we have referred. This is by no means the question. What we have to keep before our hearts is the fact that, no matter what may be the condition of the ostensible people of God at any given time, it is the privilege of the individual man of God to tread the narrow path and reap the precious fruits of simple obedience to the word of God and the precious commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This, we feel persuaded, is a truth for the day. May we all feel its holy power! We are in imminent danger of lowering the standard of personal devotedness because of the general condition. This is a fatal mistake; yea, it is the positive suggestion of the enemy of Christ and His cause. If Mordecai, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel had acted thus, what would have been the result?

Ah! no; reader, we have ever to bear in mind that our one great business is to obey and leave results with God. It may please Him to permit His servants to see striking results, or He may see fit to allow them to wait for that great day that is coming when there will be no danger of our being puffed up by seeing any little fruit of our testimony. Be this as it may, it is our plain and bounden duty to tread that bright and blessed path indicated for us by the commandments of our precious and adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May God enable us, by the grace of His Holy Spirit so to do! May we cleave to the truth of God with purpose of heart, utterly regardless of the opinions of our fellow men who may charge us with narrowness, bigotry, intolerance and such like. *We have just to go on with the Lord.*

Deuteronomy 29.

This chapter closes the second grand division of our book. In it we have a most solemn appeal to the conscience of the congregation. It is what we may term the summing up and practical application of all that has gone before in this most profound, practical and hortatory section of the five books of

Moses.

"These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel *in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them by Horeb.*" Allusion has already been made to this passage as one of the many proofs of the entire distinctness of the book of Deuteronomy from the preceding section of the Pentateuch. But it claims the reader's attention on another ground. It speaks of a special covenant made with the children of Israel, in the land of Moab, in virtue of which they were to be brought into the land. This covenant was as distinct from the covenant made at Sinai, as it was from the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In a word, it was neither pure *law*, on the one hand; nor Pure *grace*, on the other, but *government* exercised in sovereign mercy.

It is perfectly clear that Israel *could* not enter the land on the ground of the Sinai or Horeb covenant, inasmuch as they had completely failed under it, by making a golden calf. They forfeited all right and title to the land, and were only saved from instant destruction by sovereign mercy exercised toward them through the mediation and earnest intercession of Moses. It is equally plain that they *did* not enter the land on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, for had they done so, they would not have been turned out of it. Neither the extent nor the duration of their tenure answered to the terms of the covenant made with their fathers. It was by the terms of the Moab covenant that they entered upon the limited and temporary possession of the land of Canaan; and inasmuch as they have as signally failed under the Moab covenant, as under that of Horeb — failed under government as completely as under law, they are expelled from the land and scattered over the face of the earth, under the governmental dealings of God.

But not for ever. Blessed be the God of all grace, the seed of Abraham His friend shall yet possess the land of Canaan, according to the magnificent terms of the original grant. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Gifts and calling must not be confounded with law and government. Mount Zion can never be classed with Horeb and Moab. The new and everlasting covenant of grace, ratified by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, shall be gloriously fulfilled to the letter, spite of all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (Heb. 8: 8-13.)

Now the reader must carefully guard against a system of interpretation that would apply this precious and beautiful passage to the church. It involves a threefold wrong: namely, a wrong to the truth of God; a wrong to the church; and a wrong to Israel. We have raised a warning note on this subject, again and again, in the course of our studies on the Pentateuch, because we feel its immense importance. It is our deep and thorough conviction that no one can understand, much less expound the word of God who confounds Israel with the Church. The two things are as distinct as heaven and earth; and hence when God speaks of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion, if we presume to apply those names to the New Testament church, it can only issue in utter confusion. We believe it to be a simple impossibility to

set forth the mischievous consequences of such a method of handling the word of God. It puts an end to all accuracy of interpretation and to all that holy precision and divine certainty which scripture is designed and fitted to impart. It mars the integrity of truth, damages the souls of God's people, and hinders their progress in divine life and spiritual intelligence. In short, we cannot too strongly urge upon every one who reads these lines the absolute necessity of guarding against this fatally false system of handling holy scripture.

We must beware of meddling with the scope of prophecy, or the true application of the promises of God. We have no warrant whatever to interfere with the divinely appointed sphere of the covenants. The inspired apostle tells us distinctly, in the ninth of Romans, that they pertain to Israel; and if we attempt to alienate them from the Old Testament fathers and transfer them to the church of God, the body of Christ, we may depend upon it, we are doing what Jehovah-Elohim will never sanction. The church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth. Her place, her portion, her privileges, her prospect are all heavenly. She is called into existence in this time of Christ's rejection, to be associated with Him where He is now hidden in the heavens, and to share His glory in the coming day. If the reader fully grasps this grand and glorious truth, it will go far towards helping him to put things into their right places and leave them there.

We must now turn our attention to the very solemn, practical application of all that has passed before us to the conscience of every member of the congregation.

"And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles; yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.

This is peculiarly solemn. The most astounding miracles and signs may pass before us, and leave the heart untouched. These things may produce a transient effect upon the mind and upon the natural feelings; but unless the conscience is brought into the light of the divine presence, and the heart brought under the immediate action of the truth by the power of the Spirit of God, there is no permanent result reached. Nicodemus inferred from the miracles of Christ that he was a teacher come from God; but this was not enough. He had to learn the deep and wondrous meaning of that mighty sentence, "Ye must be born again." A faith founded on miracles may leave people unsaved, unblessed, unconverted — awfully responsible, no doubt, but wholly unconverted. we read, at the close of the second of John's Gospel, of many who professed to believe on Christ when they saw His miracles; but He did not commit Himself unto them. There was no divine work, nothing to be trusted. There must be a new life, a new nature; and miracles and signs cannot impart this. We must be born again — born of the word and Spirit of God. The new life is communicated by the incorruptible seed of the Gospel of God, lodged in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not a head belief founded on miracles, but a heart-belief in the Son of God. It is something which could never be known under law or government. "The *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Precious gift! Glorious source! Blessed channel! Universal and everlasting praise to the Eternal Trinity!

"And I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot" — wonderful clothes! wonderful shoes! God took care of them and made them last, blessed for ever be His great and Holy Name! — "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink; that ye might know that I am the Lord your God." They were fed and clothed by God's own gracious hand. "Man did eat angels' food." They had no need of wine or strong drink, no need of stimulants. "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and

that rock was Christ." That pure stream refreshed them in the dreary desert, and the heavenly manna sustained them day by day. All they wanted was the capacity to enjoy the divine provision.

Here alas! like ourselves, they failed. They got tired of the heavenly food, and lusted for other things. How sad that we should be so like them! How very humbling that we should so fail to appreciate that precious One whom God has given to be our life, our portion, our object, our all in all! How terrible to find our hearts craving the wretched vanities and follies of this poor passing world — its riches, its honours, its distinctions, its pleasures which all perish in the usage, and which even if they were lasting, are not, for a moment, to be compared with "the unsearchable riches of Christ!" may God, in His infinite goodness, "grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and *to know the love of Christ*, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with *all the fullness of God*." Oh! that this most blessed prayer may be answered in the deep and abiding experience of the reader and the writer!

"And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan" — formidable and much dreaded foes! — "came out against us unto battle, and we smote them." and had they been ten thousand times as great and as formidable, they would have proved to be as chaff before the presence of the God of the armies of Israel. "And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh." Will any one dare to compare this with what human history records respecting the invasion of South America by the Spaniards? Woe be to those who do so! They will find themselves terribly mistaken. There is this grand and all-important difference, that Israel had the direct authority of God for what they did to Sihon and Og; the Spaniards could show no such authority for what they did to the poor ignorant savages of South America. This alters the case completely. The introduction of God and His authority is the one perfect answer to every question, the divine solution of every difficulty. May we ever keep this weighty fact in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts, as a divine antidote against every infidel suggestion!

"Keep therefore the words of this [the Moab] covenant, and do them, *that ye may prosper in all that ye do*." Simple obedience to the word of God ever has been, is now, and ever shall be the deep and real secret of all true prosperity. To the Christian, of course, the prosperity is not in earthly or material things, but in heavenly and spiritual; and we must never forget that it is the very height of folly to think of prospering or making progress in the divine life if we are not yielding an implicit obedience to all the commandments of our blessed and adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. *If ye keep my commandments*, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Here is true Christian prosperity. May we earnestly long after it, and diligently pursue the proper method of attaining it!

"Ye stand this day *all of you* before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, *your little ones*" — touching and interesting fact! — "your wives, and *thy stranger* that is in thy camp" — How exquisite, how deeply affecting the expression "*thy stranger!*" What a powerful appeal to Israel's heart on behalf of the stranger! — "From the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day; that he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make

this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day; — for ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; and ye have seen their abominations [that is, the objects of their worship, their false gods], and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them." (Vers. 10-17.)

This earnest appeal is not only general, but also intensely individual. This is very important. We are ever prone to generalise, and thus miss the application of truth to our individual conscience. This is a grave mistake, and a most serious loss to our souls. We are, every one of us, responsible to yield an implicit obedience to the precious commandments of our Lord. It is thus we enter into the real enjoyment of our relationship, as Moses says to the people, "that he may establish thee for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God."

Nothing can be more precious. And then it is so very simple. There is no vagueness, obscurity or mysticism about it. It is simply having His most precious commandments treasured up in our hearts, acting upon the conscience, and carried out in the life. This is the true secret of habitually realising our relationship with our Father, and with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For any one to imagine that he can enjoy the blessed sense of intimate relationship, while living in the habitual neglect of our Lord's commandments is a miserable and mischievous delusion. "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love." This is the grand point. Let us deeply ponder it. "If ye love me keep my commandments." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."

These are seasonable words for this day of easy going, self-indulgent, worldly profession. May they sink down into our ears and into our hearts! May they take full possession of our whole moral being, and bring forth fruit in our individual history. We feel persuaded of the need of this practical side of things. We are in imminent danger, while seeking to keep clear of everything like legality, of running into the opposite evil of carnal laxity. The passages of holy scripture which we have just quoted — and they are but a few of many — supply the divine safeguard against both these pernicious and deadly errors. It is blessedly true that we are brought into the holy relationship of children by the sovereign grace of God, through the power of His word and Spirit. This one fact cuts up by the roots the noxious weed of legality.

But then surely the relationship has its suited affections, its duties and its responsibilities, the due recognition of which furnishes the true remedy for the terrible evil of carnal laxity so prevalent on all hands. If we are delivered from *law-works* — as, thank God, we are, if we are true Christians — it is not that we should be good-for-nothing, self-pleasers, but that *life-works* might be produced in us, to the glory of Him whose Name we bear, whose we are, and whom we are bound, by every argument, to love, obey and serve.

May we, beloved reader, earnestly seek to apply our hearts to this practical line of things. We are imperatively called upon to do so, and we may fully count upon the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to enable us to respond to the call, spite of the ten thousand difficulties and hindrances that lie in our way. Oh! for a deeper work of grace in our souls, a closer walk with God, a more pronounced discipleship! Let us give ourselves to the earnest pursuit of these things!

We must now proceed with the lawgiver's solemn appeal. He warns the people to take heed, "Lest

there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood."

These searching words are referred to by the inspired apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in a very emphatic manner. "*Looking diligently,*" he says, "lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

What weighty words are these! How full of wholesome admonition and warning! They set forth the solemn responsibility of all Christians. We are all called upon to exercise a holy, jealous, godly care over each other, which alas! is but little understood or recognised. We are not all called to be pastors or teachers. The passage just quoted does not refer particularly to such. It refers to all Christians, and we are bound to attend to it. We hear great complaints, on all sides, of the sad lack of pastoral care. No doubt there is a great lack of true pastors in the church of God, as there is of every other gift. This is only what we might expect. How could it be otherwise? How could we expect a profusion of spiritual gifts in our present miserable condition? The Spirit is grieved and quenched by our lamentable divisions, our worldliness, our gross unfaithfulness. Need we then marvel at our deplorable poverty?

But our blessed Lord is full of deep and tender compassion toward us, in the midst of our ruin and spiritual desolation; and if we only humbled ourselves under His mighty hand, He would graciously lift us up, and enable us, in many ways, to meet the deficiency of pastoral gift amongst us. We might, through His precious grace, look, more diligently and lovingly, after one another, and seek each other's spiritual progress and prosperity in a thousand ways.

Let not the reader imagine, for a moment, that we mean to give the smallest countenance to prying officiousness or unwarrantable espionage on the part of Christians. Far away be the thought! We look upon such things as perfectly insufferable in the church of God. They stand at the very moral antipodes of that loving, holy, tender, diligent pastoral care of which we speak, and for which we long.

But does it not strike the reader that, while giving the widest possible berth to these most contemptible evils to which we have just referred, we might cultivate and exercise a loving prayerful interest in one another, and a holy watchfulness and care which might prevent many a root of bitterness from springing up? We cannot doubt it. It is quite true we are not all called to be pastors; and it is equally true that there is a grievous dearth of pastors in the church of God. We mean, of course, true pastors — pastors given by the Head of the church-men with a pastor's heart, and real pastoral gift and power. All this is undeniable, and for this very reason, it ought to stir the hearts of the Lord's beloved people everywhere to seek of Him grace to enable them to exercise a tender, loving, brotherly care over one another which might go a great way toward supplying the need of pastors amongst us. One thing is clear, that in the passage just quoted from Hebrews 12 there is nothing said about pastors. It is simply a most stirring exhortation to all Christians to exercise mutual care, and to watch against the springing up of any root of bitterness.

And oh! how needful this is! How terrible are those roots! How bitter they are! How widely spread are their pernicious tendrils, at times! What irreparable mischief they do! How many are defiled by them! How many precious links of friendship are snapped, and how many hearts broken by them! Yes, reader, and how often we have felt persuaded that a little judicious pastoral or even brotherly care, a little loving, godly counsel might have nipped the evil in the bud and thus hindered an incalculable amount of mischief and sorrow. May we all lay these things to heart, and earnestly seek grace to do what we can to prevent roots of bitterness springing up and spreading abroad their defiling influence!

But we must hearken to further weighty and searching words from the beloved and venerable

lawgiver He drags a most solemn picture of the end of the one who caused the root of bitterness to spring up.

"And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, *that he bless himself in his heart*, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Fatal delusion! Crying peace, peace, when there is no peace, but imminent wrath and judgement. "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and," — instead of the "peace" which he vainly promised himself — "all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." Awful warning to all who act as roots of bitterness in the midst of the people of God, and to all who countenance them!

"And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law; so that the generation to come of your children, that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it; and that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath." Soul-subduing examples of the governmental dealings of the living God which ought to speak with a voice of thunder in the ears of all those who are turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the Lord that bought them! - "Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book; and the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day." (Vers. 19-28.)

Reader, how peculiarly solemn is all this! What a powerful illustration of the apostle's words, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" And again, "Our God is a consuming fire!" How important that the professing church should give heed to such warning notes! Most assuredly, she is called to learn much from the history of God's dealings with His people Israel; Romans 11 is perfectly clear and conclusive as to this. The apostle, in speaking of the divine judgement upon the unbelieving branches of the olive tree, thus appeals to Christendom, "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. BE NOT HIGH-MINDED, BUT FEAR; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*"

Alas! the professing church has not continued in the goodness of God. It is utterly impossible to read her history, in the light of scripture, and not see this. She has grievously departed, and there is nothing before her save the unmingled wrath of Almighty God. The beloved members of the body of Christ who, sad to say, are mingled with the terrible mass of corrupt profession, will be gathered out of it and taken to the place prepared in the Father's house in heaven. Then, if not before, they will see how wrong it was to have remained in connection with what was so flagrantly opposed to the mind of Christ

as revealed with divine clearness and simplicity in the holy scriptures.

But as to the great thing known as Christendom, it will be "spued out" and "cut off." It will be given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but *had pleasure in unrighteousness.*"

Tremendous words! May they ring in the ears and sink down into the hearts of thousands who are going on from day to day, week to week, and year to year, content with a mere name to live, a form of godliness but denying the power, "*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*". What an awfully graphic picture of so-called Christian England! How appalling the condition and the destiny of the pleasure hunting thousands who are rushing blindly, heedlessly and madly down the inclined plane that leads to hopeless and everlasting misery! May God, in His infinite goodness, by the power of His Spirit and by the mighty action of His word, rouse the hearts of His people everywhere to a more profound and influential sense of these things!

We must now, ere closing this section, briefly direct the reader's attention to the last verse of our chapter. It is one of those passages of scripture sadly misunderstood and misapplied. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." This verse is constantly used to hinder the progress of souls in the knowledge of "the deep things of God;" but its simple meaning is this; the things "revealed" are what we have had before us in the preceding chapter of this book; the things "secret," on the other hand, refer to those resources of grace which God had in store to be unfolded when the people should have utterly failed to "do all the words of this law." The revealed things are what Israel ought to have done, but did not do; the secret things are what God would do, spite of Israel's sad and shameful failure, and they are most blessedly presented in the following chapters — the counsels of divine grace, the provisions of sovereign mercy to be displayed when Israel shall have thoroughly learnt the lesson of their utter failure under both the Moab and the Horeb covenants.

Thus this passage, when rightly understood, so far from affording any warrant for the use so constantly made of it, encourages the heart to search into these things which, though "secret" to Israel, in the plains of Moab, are fully and clearly "revealed" to us for our profit, comfort and edification.* The Holy Spirit came down, on the day of Pentecost to lead the disciples into *all truth*. The canon of scripture is complete; all the purposes and counsels of God are fully revealed. The mystery of the church completes the entire circle of divine truth. The apostle John could say to all God's children, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know *all things.*"

{*1 Cor 2: 9 is another of the misunderstood and misapplied passages. "But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Here, people are sure to stop, and hence conclude that we cannot possibly know anything of the precious things which God has in store for us. But the very next verse proves the gross absurdity of any such conclusion. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we" — that is, all the Lord's people — "have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; *that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*" Thus this passage, like Deuteronomy 19: 29, teaches the very opposite of what is so constantly deduced from it. How important to examine and weigh the context of the passages which are quoted!}

Thus the entire New Testament abounds with evidence to prove the mistaken use that is so constantly made of Deuteronomy 19: 29. We have dwelt upon it because we are aware that the Lord's

beloved people are sadly hindered by it, in their progress in divine knowledge. The enemy would ever seek to keep them in the dark, when they ought to be walking in the sunlight of divine revelation — to keep them as babes feeding upon milk, when they ought, as those "of full age," to be feeding upon the "strong meat" so freely provided for the church of God. We have but little idea of how the Spirit of God is grieved, and Christ dishonoured by the low tone of things amongst us. How few really "know the things that are freely given to us of God!" Where are the proper privileges of the Christian understood, believed and realised? How meagre is our apprehension of divine things! How stunted our growth! How feeble our practical exposition of the truth of God! What a blotted epistle of Christ we present!

Beloved Christian reader, let us seriously ponder these things in the divine presence. Let us honestly search out the root of all this lamentable failure, and have it judged and put away, that so we may, more faithfully and unmistakably, declare whose we are and whom we serve. May it be more thoroughly manifest that Christ is our one absorbing object!

Deuteronomy 30.

This chapter is one of very deep interest and importance. It is prophetic, and presents to us some of "the secret things" referred to at the close of the Preceding chapter. It unfolds some of those most precious resources of grace treasured up in the heart of God to be unfolded when Israel, having utterly failed to keep the law, should be scattered to the ends of the earth.

"And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and *thou shalt call them to mind* among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and *shalt return unto the Lord thy God*, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, *thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul*; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee."

How touching, how perfectly beautiful is all this! It is no question of law-keeping, but something far deeper, far more precious; it is the turning of the heart — the whole heart, the whole soul to Jehovah, at a time when a literal obedience to the law is utterly impossible. It is a broken and contrite heart turning to God, and God, in deep and tender compassion, meeting that heart. This is true blessedness, at all times, and in all places. It is something above and beyond all dispensational dealings and arrangements. It is God Himself, in all the fullness and ineffable blessedness of what He is, meeting a repentant soul; and we may truly say that when these two meet, all is divinely and eternally settled.

It must be perfectly clear to the reader that what we have now before us is something as far removed from law-keeping and human righteousness as heaven is above earth. The first verse of our chapter proves, in the clearest possible manner, that the people are viewed as in a condition in which the carrying out of the ordinances of the law is a simple impossibility. But, blessed be God, there is not a spot on the face of the earth, be it ever so remote, from which the heart cannot turn to God. The *hands* might not be able to present a victim for the altar; the *feet* might not be able to travel to the appointed place of worship; but the *heart* could travel to God. Yes; the poor crushed, broken, contrite heart could go directly to God, and God, in the depth of His compassion and tender mercy, could meet that heart, bind it up and fill it to overflowing with the rich comfort and consolation of His love, and the full joy of His salvation.

But let us hearken yet further to those "secret things" which "belong to God" — things precious beyond all human thought. "If any of thine be driven out *unto the utmost parts of heaven* as far as they could go — "from thence will the Lord thy God *gather thee*, and from thence will he *fetch thee*; and the

Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and *He will do thee good*, and multiply thee above thy fathers."

How precious is all this! But there is something far better still. Not only will He gather them, fetch them, and multiply them, not only will He act in power *for* them, but He will do a mighty work of grace *in* them of far more value than any outward prosperity however desirable. "And the Lord thy God will *circumcise thine heart*" — the very centre of the whole moral being, the source of all those influences which go to form the character — "and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" — the grand moral regulator of the entire life — "and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee" — A solemn word for all those nations who have ever sought to oppress the Jews! — "And thou shalt return, and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day.

Nothing can be more morally lovely than all this. The people gathered, fetched, multiplied, blessed, circumcised in heart, thoroughly devoted to Jehovah, and yielding a whole-hearted, loving obedience to all His precious commandments! What can exceed this in blessedness for a people on the earth?

"And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good; for the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers," "if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is *very nigh unto thee*, in thy *mouth*, and in thy *heart*, that thou mayest do it." (Vers. 10-14.)

This is a singularly interesting passage. It furnishes a key to "the secret things" already referred to, and sets forth the great principles of divine righteousness, in vivid and beautiful contrast to legal righteousness in every possible aspect. According to the truth here unfolded, it matters not, in the least, where a soul may be, here, there or anywhere; "The word is nigh thee." It could not possibly be nigher. What could be nigher than "In thy mouth, and in thy heart?" We need not, as we say, move a muscle to get it. If it were above us or beyond us, reason would that we might complain of our utter inability to reach it. But no; there is no need of either *hands* or *feet*, in this most blessed and all-important matter. The *heart* and the *mouth* are here called into exercise.

There is a very beautiful allusion to the above passage in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, to which the reader may refer with much interest and profit. Indeed it is so full of evangelic sweetness that we must quote it.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being *ignorant of God's righteousness*, and *going about* to establish their own righteousness, *have not submitted themselves* unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the day for righteousness to *every one that believeth*" — not to every one who *says* he believes, as in James 2: 14. — "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall

ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down") — striking parenthesis! Marvellous instance of the Spirit's use of Old Testament scripture! It bears the distinct stamp of His master hand — "Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ Again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, *the word of faith, which we preach;*" — How perfectly beautiful the addition! Who but the Spirit could have supplied it? — "That if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

Mark this beautiful word, "whosoever." It, most assuredly, takes in the Jew. It meets him wherever he may be, a poor exile, at the very ends of the earth, under circumstances where obedience to the law, as such, was simply impossible; but where the rich and precious grace of God, and His most glorious salvation could meet him, in the depth of his need. There, though he could not keep the law, he could confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead; and this is salvation.

But then, if it be "whosoever" it cannot possibly be confined to the Jew; nay, it cannot be confined at all; and hence the apostle goes on to say, "There *is* no difference between the Jew and the Greek" There *was* the greatest possible difference under the law. There could not be a broader or more distinct line of demarcation than that which the lawgiver had drawn between the Jew and the Greek; but that line is obliterated, for a double reason: first, because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3: 23.) And, secondly, because "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

How blessedly simple! "Calling" "believing" "confessing!" Nothing can exceed the transcendent grace that shines in these words. No doubt, it is assumed that the soul is really in earnest; that the heart is engaged. God deals in moral realities. It is not a nominal, notional, head belief; but divine faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost — a Living faith which connects the soul, in a divine way and by an everlasting link, to Christ.

And then there is the confessing with the mouth, the Lord Jesus. This is of cardinal importance. A man may say, "I believe in my heart, but I am not one for parading my religious belief. I am not a talker. I keep my religion to myself. It is entirely a matter between my soul and God; I do not believe in that perpetual intruding our religious impressions upon other people. Many who talk loudly and largely about their religion in public, make but a sorry figure in private, and I certainly do not want to be identified with such. I utterly abhor all cant. Deeds, not words for me.

All this sounds very plausible; but it cannot stand for a moment in the light of Romans 10: 9. There must be the confession with the mouth. Many would like to be saved by Christ, but they shrink from the reproach of confessing His precious Name. They would like to get to heaven when they die, but they do not want to be identified with a rejected Christ. Now God does not own such. He looks for the full, bold, clear confession of Christ, in the face of a hostile world. Our Lord Christ, too, looks for this confession. He declares that whoso confesses Him before men, He will confess before the angels of God; but whoso denies Him before men, He will deny before the angels of God. The thief on the cross exhibited the two great branches of true saving faith. He believed with his heart, and confessed with his mouth. Yes, he gave a flat contradiction to the whole world on the most vital question that ever was or ever could be raised, and that question was Christ. He was a thoroughly pronounced disciple of Christ. Oh! that there were more such! There is a terrible amount of indefiniteness and cold half-heartedness in

the professing church, grievous to the Holy Ghost, offensive to Christ, hateful to God. We long for bold decision, out-and-out, unmistakable testimony to the Lord Jesus. May God the Holy Spirit stir up all our hearts, and lead us forth, in more thorough consecration of heart, to that blessed One who freely gave His life to save us from everlasting burnings!

We shall close this section by quoting for the reader the last few verses of our chapter in which Moses makes a peculiarly solemn appeal to the hearts and consciences of the people. It is a most powerful word of exhortation.

"See, I have set before thee this day *life and good*, and *death and evil*." Thus it is ever in the government of God. The two things are inseparably linked together. Let no man dare to snap the link. God "will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon *every soul of man that doeth evil*, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to *every man that worketh good* to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. *For there is no respect of persons with God.*" (Rom 2: 6-11)

The apostle does not, in this great practical passage, go into the question of power; he simply states the broad fact — a fact applicable at all times, and under all dispensations, government, Law and Christianity; it ever holds good that "God will render to every man according to his deeds." This is of the very last possible importance. May we ever bear it in mind. It may perhaps be said, "Are not Christians under grace?" Yes, thank God; but does this weaken, in the smallest degree, the grand governmental principle stated above? Nay, it strengthens and confirms it immensely.

But, again, some may feel disposed to say, "Can any unconverted person do good?" We reply, this question is not raised, in the scripture just quoted. Every one taught of God knows, and feels and owns, that not one atom of "good" has ever been done in this world but by the grace of God; that man left to himself will do evil only, evil continually. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." All this is most blessedly true, and thankfully owned by every pious soul; but it leaves wholly untouched the fact set forth in Deuteronomy 30 and confirmed by Romans 2 that *life and good*, *death and evil* are bound together by an inseparable link. May we never forget it! May it ever abide in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts!

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgements, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if *thine heart turn away*, so that *thou wilt not hear*; but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest *cleave unto Him*;" — the all important, essential thing, for each, for all, the very spring and power of all true religion, in every age, in every place — "for *he is thy life*, and *the length of thy days*" — How close! How vital! How real! How very precious! — "that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." (Vers. 15-20.)

Nothing can be more solemn than this closing appeal to the congregation: it is in full keeping with the tone and character of the entire book of Deuteronomy — a book marked throughout by the

most powerful exhortations that ever fell on mortal ears, we have no such soul-stirring appeals in any of the preceding sections of the Pentateuch. Each book, we need not say, has its own specific niche to fill, its own distinct object and character; but the great burden of Deuteronomy, from beginning to end, is exhortation; its thesis, the word of God, its object, obedience — whole-hearted, earnest, loving obedience — grounded on a known relationship, and enjoyed privileges.

Deuteronomy 31.

The heart of Moses still lingers, with deep tenderness and affectionate solicitude, over the congregation. It seems as though he could never weary of pouring into their ears his earnest exhortations. He felt their need; he foresaw their danger; and, like a true and faithful shepherd, he sought, with all the deep and tender affection of His large, loving heart, to prepare them for what was before them. No one can read his closing words without being struck with their peculiarly solemn tone. They remind us of Paul's touching farewell to the elders of Ephesus. Both these beloved and honoured servants realised, in a very vivid manner, the seriousness of their own position, and that of the persons they were addressing. They felt the uncommon gravity of the interests at stake, and the urgent need of the most faithful dealing with the heart and conscience. This will account for what we may term the awful solemnity of their appeals. All who really enter into the situation and destiny of the people of God, in a world like this, *must* be serious. The true sense of these things, the apprehension of them in the divine presence must, of necessity, impart a holy gravity to the character and a special pungency and power to the testimony.

"And Moses went, and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in; also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan." How very touching this allusion to his great age, and this fresh and final reference to the solemn governmental dealing of God with himself personally! The direct and manifest object of both was to give effect to his appeal to the hearts and consciences of the people — to strengthen the moral lever by which this beloved and honoured servant of God sought to move them in the direction of simple obedience. If he points to his gray hairs, or to the holy discipline exercised towards him, it, most assuredly, is not for the purpose of bringing himself, his circumstances, or his feelings before them, but simply to touch the deepest springs of their moral being by every possible means.

"The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them; and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said. And the Lord shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them whom he destroyed. And the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you" Not a word of murmuring or repining as to himself; not the faintest tinge of envy or jealousy in his reference to the one who was to take his place; not the most distant approach to anything of the kind; every selfish consideration is swallowed up in the one grand object of encouraging the hearts of the people to tread, with firm step, the pathway of obedience which was then, is now, and ever must be, the path of victory, the path of blessing, the path of peace.

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." What precious, soul-sustaining words are these, beloved Christian reader! How eminently calculated to lift the heart above every discouraging influence! The blessed consciousness of the Lord's presence with us, and the remembrance of His gracious ways with us, in days gone by, must ever prove the true secret of strength in moving onward.

The same mighty hand which had subdued before them Sihon and Og, could subdue all the kings of Canaan. The Amorites were quite as formidable as the Canaanites; Jehovah was more than a match for all. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out"

Only think of God driving out people with His own hand! What an answer to all the arguments and difficulties of a morbid sentimentality! How very shallow and erroneous are the thoughts of some in reference to the governmental ways of God! How miserably one-sided their notions of His character and actings! How Perfectly absurd the attempt to measure God by the standard of human judgement and feeling! It is very evident that Moses had not the smallest particle of sympathy with such sentiments, when he addressed to the congregation of Israel the magnificent exhortation quoted above. He knew something of the gravity and solemnity of the government of God, something too of the blessedness of having Him as a shield in the day of battle, a refuge and a resource in every hour of peril and need.

Let us hearken to his encouraging words addressed to the man who was to succeed him. "And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, *Be strong and of a good courage*: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed."

Joshua needed a special word for himself, as one called to occupy a prominent and very distinguished place in the congregation. But the word to him embodies the same precious truth as that addressed to the whole assembly. He is assured of the divine presence and power with him. This is enough for each, for all; for Joshua as for the most obscure member of the assembly. Yes, reader, and enough for thee, whoever thou art, or whatever be thy sphere of action. It matters not, in the least, what difficulties or dangers may lie before us, our God is amply sufficient for all. If only we have the sense of the Lord's presence with us, and the authority of His word for the work in which we are engaged, we may move on with joyful confidence, spite of ten thousand difficulties and hostile influences.

"And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when *all Israel* is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, *men*, and *women*, and *children*, and *thy stranger* that is within thy gates, that they may *hear* and that they may *learn*, and *fear* the Lord your God, and *observe to do all the words* of this law; and that *their children, which have not known anything, may hear; and learn to fear the Lord your God*, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." (Vers. 9-35.)

Two things in the forgoing passage claim our special attention; first, the fact that Jehovah attached the most solemn importance to the public assembly of His people for the purpose of hearing His word. "all Israel" — "men, women and children" — with the stranger who had cast in his lot amongst them, were commanded to assemble themselves together to hear the reading of the book of the law of God, that all might learn His holy will and their duty. Each member of the assembly, from the eldest to the youngest, was to be brought into direct personal contact with the revealed will of Jehovah, that each one might know his solemn responsibility.

And, secondly, we have to weigh the fact that the children were to be gathered before the Lord to

hearken to His word. Both these facts are full of weighty instruction for all the members of the church of God — instruction urgently called for on all sides. There is a most deplorable amount of failure as to these two points. We sadly neglect the assembling of ourselves together for the simple reading of the holy scriptures. There does not seem to be sufficient attraction in the word of God itself to bring us together. There is an unhealthy craving for other things; human oratory, music, religious excitement of some kind or other seems needful to bring people together; anything and everything but the precious word of God.

It will perhaps be said that people have the word of God in their houses; that it is quite different now from what it was with Israel; every one can read the scriptures at home, and there is not the same necessity for the public reading. Such a plea will not stand the test of truth for a moment. We may rest assured if the word of God were loved and prized and studied in private and in the family, it would be loved and prized and studied in public. We should delight to gather together round the fountain of holy scripture, to drink, in happy fellowship, of the living water for our common refreshment and blessing.

But it is not so. The word of God is not loved and studied, either privately or publicly. Trashy literature it devoured in private; and music, ritualistic services and imposing ceremonies, are eagerly sought after in public. Thousands will flock to hear music and pay for admission; but how few care for a meeting to read the holy scriptures! These are facts, and facts are powerful arguments. We cannot get over them. There is a growing thirst for religious excitement, and a growing distaste for the calm study of holy scripture, and the spiritual exercises of the Christian assembly. It is perfectly useless to deny it. We cannot shut our eyes to it. The evidence of it meets us on every hand.

Thank God, there are a few, here and there, who really love the word of God, and delight to meet, in holy fellowship, for the study of its precious truths. May the Lord increase the number of such, and bless them abundantly! May our lot be cast with them, "till travelling days are done!" They are but an obscure and feeble remnant everywhere; but they love Christ and cleave to His word; and their richest enjoyment is to get together and think and speak and sing of Him. May God bless them and keep them! May He deepen His precious work in their souls, and bind them more closely to Himself and one another, and thus prepare them, in the state of their affections, for the appearing of "The Bright and Morning Star".

We must now turn, for a few moments, to the closing verses of our chapter, in which Jehovah speaks to His beloved and honoured servant in tones of deep and touching solemnity as to His own death, and as to Israel's dark and gloomy future.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud; and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, *Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?* And I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods."

"Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." So says the Spirit of Christ, in Psalm 16. Israel has proved, is proving, and shall yet more fully prove the solemn truth of these words.

Their history in the past, their present dispersion and desolation, and, beyond all, the "great tribulation" through which they have yet to pass, at "the time of the end" — all go to confirm and illustrate the truth that the sure and certain way to multiply our sorrows is to turn away from the Lord, and look to any creature resource. This is one of the many and varied practical lessons which we have to gather from the marvellous history of the seed of Abraham. May we learn it effectually! May we learn to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and turn away, with holy decision, from every other object. This, we feel persuaded, is the only path of true happiness and peace. May we ever be found in it!

"Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, *that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel*. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear."

How deeply affecting, how peculiarly solemn is all this! Instead of Israel being a witness for Jehovah, before all nations, the song of Moses was to be a witness for Jehovah against the children of Israel. They were called to be His witnesses; they were responsible to declare His Name, and to show forth His praise in that land into which, in His faithfulness, and sovereign mercy, He conducted them. But alas! they utterly and shamefully failed; and hence in view of this sad and most humiliating failure a song was to be written which, in the first place, as we shall see, sets forth, in most magnificent strains, the glory of God; and, secondly, records, in accents of inflexible faithfulness, Israel's deplorable failure, in every stage of their history.

"Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, *Be strong, and of a good courage*, for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and *I will be with thee*." Joshua was not to be discouraged or faint-hearted because of the predicted unfaithfulness of the people. He was, like his great progenitor, to be strong in faith giving glory to God. He was to move forward with joyful confidence, leaning on the arm and confiding in the word of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, in nothing terrified by his adversaries, but resting in the precious, soul-sustaining assurance that, however the seed of Abraham might fail to obey, and as a consequence bring down judgement on themselves, yet the God of Abraham would infallibly maintain and make good His promise, and glorify His Name in the final restoration and everlasting blessing of His chosen people.

All this comes out, with uncommon vividness and power in the song of Moses; and Joshua was called to serve in the faith of it. He was to fix his eye not upon Israel's ways, but upon the eternal stability of the divine covenant with Abraham. He was to conduct Israel across the Jordan and plant them in that fair inheritance designed for them in the purpose of God. Had Joshua occupied his mind with Israel, he must have flung down his sword and given up in despair. But no, he had to encourage himself in the Lord his God, and serve in the energy of a faith that endures as seeing Him who is invisible.

Precious, soul-sustaining, God-honouring faith! May the reader, whatever be his line of life or sphere of action, know, in the profoundest depths of his soul, the moral power of this divine principle! May every beloved child of God and every servant of Christ know it! It is the only thing which will enable us to grapple with the difficulties, hindrances and hostile influences which surround us in the

scene through which we are passing, and to finish our course with joy.

"And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, *that it may be there for a witness against thee*. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."

How forcibly we are here reminded of Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus! "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves, shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20: 29-32.)

Man is the same always and everywhere. His history is a blotted one, from beginning to end. But oh! it is such a relief and solace to the heart to know and remember that God is ever the same, and His word abides and is "settled for ever in heaven." It was hid in the side of the ark of the covenant and there preserved intact, spite of all the grievous sin and folly of the people. This gives sweet rest to the heart, at all times, in the face of human failure, and the wreck and ruin of everything committed to man's hand. "The word of our God shall stand for ever:" and while it bears a true and solemn testimony against man and his ways, it also conveys home to the heart the most precious and tranquillising assurance that God is above all man's sin and folly, that His resources are absolutely inexhaustible, and that, ere long, His glory shall shine out and fill the whole scene. The Lord be praised for the deep consolation of all this!

Deuteronomy 32.

"And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words; of this song, until they were ended." It is not too much to say that one of the very grandest and most comprehensive sections in the divine Volume now lies open before us and claims our prayerful attention. It takes in the whole range of God's dealings with Israel from first to last, and presents a most solemn record of their grievous sin and of divine wrath and judgement. But, blessed be God, it begins and ends with Him; and this is full of deepest and richest blessing for the soul. If it were not so, if we had only the melancholy story of man's ways, we should be completely overwhelmed. But in this magnificent song, as indeed in the entire Volume, we begin with God and we end with God. This tranquillises the spirit most blessedly, and enables us, in calm and holy confidence, to pursue the history of man; to see everything going to pieces in his hands, and to mark the actings of the enemy in opposition to the counsels and purposes of God. We can afford to see the complete failure and ruin of the creature, in every shape and form, because we know and are assured that God will be God, in spite of everything. He will have the upper hand in the end, and then all will be, must be right. God shall be all in all, and there shall be neither enemy nor evil occurrent throughout that vast universe of bliss of which our adorable Lord Christ shall be the central sun for ever.

But we must turn to the song.

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." Heaven and earth are summoned to hearken to this magnificent outpouring. Its range is commensurate with its vast moral importance. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; because I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God."

Here lies the solid, the imperishable foundation of everything. Come what may, the Name of our God shall stand for ever. No power of earth or hell can possibly countervail the divine purpose, or hinder the outshining of the divine glory. What sweet rest this gives the heart, in the midst of this dark, sorrowful sin-stricken world, and in the face of the apparently successful schemes of the enemy! Our refuge, our resource, our sweet relief and solace are found in the Name of the Lord our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Truly the publication of that blessed Name must ever be as the refreshing dew and tender rain falling upon the heart. This is, of a truth, the divine and heavenly doctrine on which the soul can feed, and by which it is sustained, at all times, and under all circumstances.

"He is *the* Rock" — not merely *a* rock. There is, there can be no other Rock but Himself. Eternal and universal homage to His glorious Name! — "His work is perfect;" — not a single flaw in anything that comes from His blessed hand, all bears the stamp of absolute perfection. This will be made manifest to all created intelligences by-and-by. It is manifest to faith now, and is a spring of divine consolation to all true believers. The very thought of it distils as the dew upon the thirsty soul. "For *all* his ways are judgement; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Infidels may cavil and sneer; they may, in their fancied wisdom, try to pick holes in the divine actings; but their folly shall be manifest to all. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." God must have the upper hand, in the end. Let men beware how they presume to call in question the sayings and doings of the only true, the only wise and the almighty God.

There is something uncommonly fine in the opening notes of this song. It gives the sweetest rest to the heart to know that however man and even the People of God may fail and come to ruin, yet we have to do with One who abideth faithful and can not deny Himself, whose ways are absolutely perfect, and who, when the enemy has done his very utmost, and brought all his malignant designs to a head, shall glorify Himself and bring in universal and everlasting blessedness.

True, He has to execute judgement upon man's ways. He is constrained to take down the rod of discipline and use it, at times, with terrible severity upon His own people. He is perfectly intolerant of evil in those who bear His holy Name. All this comes out, with special solemnity in the song before us. Israel's ways are exposed and dealt with unsparingly; nothing is allowed to pass; all is set forth with holy precision and faithfulness. Thus we read, "They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?"

Here we have the first note of reproof, in this song; but no sooner has it fallen on the ear than it is followed by a most precious outpouring of testimony to the goodness, loving kindness, faithfulness, and tender mercy of Jehovah, the Elohim of Israel, and the Most High, or Elion of all the earth. "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee; when the Most High [God's millennial title] divided to the

nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

What a glorious fact is here unfolded to our view! A fact but little understood or taken account of by the nations of the earth. How little do men consider that, in the original settlement of the great national boundaries, the Most High had direct reference to "the children of Israel"! That thus it was, and the reader should seek to grasp this grand and intensely interesting fact. When we look at Geography and History from a divine standpoint, we find that Canaan and the seed of Jacob are God's centre. Yes; Canaan, a little strip of land, lying along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, with an area of eleven thousand square miles, about a third of the extent of Ireland is the centre of God's geography; and the twelve tribes of Israel are the central object of God's history. How little have geographers and historians thought of this! They have described countries, and written the history of nations which in geographical extent and political importance far outstrip Palestine and its people, according to human thinking, but which, in God's account, are as nothing compared with that little strip of land which He deigns to call His own, and which it is His fixed purpose to inherit through the seed of Abraham His friend.*

{*How true it is that God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, or His ways as man's ways? Man attaches importance to extensive territories, material strength, pecuniary resources, well-disciplined armies, powerful fleets. God, on the contrary, takes no account of such things, they are to Him as the small dust of the balance. "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Hence we may see the moral reason why, in selecting a country to be the centre of His earthly plans and counsels, Jehovah did not select one of vast extent, but a very small and insignificant strip of land of little account in the thoughts of men. But oh! what importance attaches to that little spot! What principles have been unfolded there! What events have taken place there! What deeds have been done there! What plans and purposes are yet to be wrought out there! There is not a spot on the face of the earth so interesting to the heart of God as the land of Canaan and the city of Jerusalem. Scripture teems with evidence as to this. We could fill a small volume with proofs. The time is rapidly approaching when living acts will do what the fullest and clearest testimony of scripture fails to do, namely, convince men that the land of Israel was, is, and ever shall be God's earthly centre. All other nations owe their importance, their interest, their place in the pages of inspiration simply to the fact of their being, in some way or other, connected with the land and people of Israel. How little do historians know or think of this! But surely every one who loves God ought to know it and ponder it.}

We cannot attempt to dwell upon this most important and suggestive fact, but we would ask the reader to give it his serious consideration. He will find it fully developed and strikingly illustrated in the prophetic scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him *as the apple of his eye*" — the most sensitive, delicate part of the human body — "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them upon her wings;" — to teach them to fly and keep them from falling "so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the

grape."

Need we say that the primary application of all this is to Israel? No doubt, the church may learn from it, and profit by it; but to apply it to the church would involve a double mistake, a mistake of the most serious nature; it would involve nothing less than the reducing of the church from a heavenly to an earthly level; and the most unwarrantable interference with Israel's divinely appointed place and portion. What, we may lawfully inquire, has the church of God, the body of Christ to do with the settlement of the nations of the earth? Nothing whatever. The church, *according to the mind of God*, is a stranger on the earth. Her portion, her hope, her home, her inheritance, her all is heavenly. It would make no difference in the current of this world's history if the church had never been heard of. Her calling, her walk, her destiny, her whole character and course, her principles and morals, are, or ought to be heavenly. The church has nothing to do with the politics of this world. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence she looks for the Saviour: She proves false to her Lord, false to her calling, false to her principles in so far as she meddles with the affairs of nations. It is her high and holy privilege to be linked and morally identified with a rejected, crucified, risen and glorified Christ. She has no more to do with the present system of things, or with the current of this world's history, than her glorified Head in the heavens. "They," says our Lord Christ, speaking of His people, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

This is conclusive. It fixes our position and our path in the most precise and definite way possible. "As he is so are we in this world." This involves a double truth, namely, our perfect acceptance with God, and our complete separation from the world. We are *in* the world, but not *of* it. We have to pass through it as pilgrims and strangers looking out for the coming of our Lord, the appearing of the bright and morning star. It is no part of our business to interfere with municipal or political matters. We are called and exhorted to obey the powers that be, to pray for all in authority, to pay tribute, and owe no man anything; to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" among whom we are to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

From all this we may gather something of the immense practical importance of "rightly dividing the word of truth." We have but little idea of the injury done both to the truth of God and to the souls of His people by confounding Israel with the church, the earthly and the heavenly. It hinders all progress in the knowledge of scripture, and mars the integrity of Christian walk and testimony. This may seem a strong statement; but we have seen the truth of it painfully illustrated, times without number; and we feel that we cannot too urgently call the attention of the reader to the subject. We have, more than once, referred to it in the progress of our studies on the Pentateuch, and therefore we shall not further pursue it here, but proceed with our chapter.

At verse 15, we reach a very different note in the song of Moses. Up to this point, we have had before us God and His actings, His purposes, His counsels, His thoughts, His loving interest in His people Israel, His tender gracious dealings with them. All this is full of deepest, richest blessing. There is — there can be no drawback here. When we have God and His ways before us, there is no hindrance to the heart's enjoyment. All is perfection - absolute, divine perfection, and as we dwell upon it, we are filled. with wonder, love and praise.

But there is the human side; and here alas! all is failure and disappointment. Thus at the fifteenth verse of our chapter we read, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" — what a very full and suggestive statement! How vividly it presents, in its brief compass, the moral history of Israel! — thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and

lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee."

There is a solemn voice in all this for the writer and the reader. We are, each of us, in danger of treading the moral path indicated by the words just quoted. Surrounded, on all hands, by the rich and varied mercies of God, we are apt to make use of them to nourish a spirit of self-complacency. We make use of the gifts to shut out the Giver. In a word, we, too, like Israel, wax fat and kick. We forget God. We lose the sweet and precious sense of His presence, and of His perfect sufficiency, and turn to other objects as Israel did to false gods. How often do we forget the Rock that begat us, the God that formed us, the Lord that redeemed us! And all this is so much the more inexcusable in us, inasmuch as our privileges are so much higher than theirs. We are brought into a relationship and a position of which Israel knew absolutely nothing; our privileges and blessings are of the very highest order; it is our privilege to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; we are the objects of that perfect love which stopped not short of introducing us into a position in which it can be said of us, "As he [Christ] is, so are we in this world." Nothing could exceed the blessedness of this; even divine love itself could go no further than this. It is not merely that the love of God has been manifested to us in the gift and the death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and in giving us His Spirit; but it has been made perfect with us by placing us in the very same position as that blessed One on the throne of God.

All this is perfectly marvellous. It passeth knowledge. And yet how prone we are to forget the blessed One who has so loved us, and wrought for us, and blessed us! How often we slip away from Him in the spirit of our minds and the affections of our hearts! It is not merely a question of what the professing church, as a whole, has done, but the very much deeper, closer, more pointed question of what our own wretched hearts are constantly prone to do. We are apt to forget God, and to turn to other objects, to our serious loss and His dishonour.

Would we know how the heart of God feels as to all this? Would we form anything like a correct idea of how He resents it? Let us hearken to the burning words addressed to His erring people Israel, the overwhelming strains of the song of Moses. May we have grace to hear them aright, and deeply profit by them!

"And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, *because of the provoking of His sons and of His daughters*. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be;" — alas! alas! a truly deplorable end — "for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and shall set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction; I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs." (Vers. 19-26.)

Here we have a most solemn record of God's governmental dealings with His people — a record eminently calculated to set forth the awful truth of Hebrews 10: 31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The history of Israel, in the past; their condition, at present; and what they are

yet to pass through, in the future, all goes to prove in the most impressive manner that "our God is a consuming fire." No nation on the face of the earth has ever been called to pass through such severe discipline as the nation of Israel. As the Lord reminds them in those deeply solemn words, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." No other nation was ever called to occupy the highly privileged place of actual relationship with Jehovah. This dignity was reserved for one nation; but the very dignity was the basis of a most solemn responsibility. If they were called to be His people, they were responsible to conduct themselves in a way worthy of such a wondrous position, or else have to undergo the heaviest chastenings ever endured by any nation under the sun. Men may reason about all this; they may raise all manner of questions as to the moral consistency of a benevolent Being acting according to the terms set forth in verses 22-25 of our chapter. But all such questions and reasonings must, sooner or later, be discovered to be utter folly. It is perfectly useless for men to argue against the solemn actings of divine government, or the terrible severity of the discipline exercised towards the chosen People of God. How much wiser, and better, and safer to be warned by the facts of Israel's history to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold upon eternal life, and full salvation revealed in the precious gospel of God!

And then, with regard to the use which Christians should make of the record of His dealings with His earthly people, we are bound to turn it to most profitable account by learning from it the urgent need of walking humbly, watchfully and faithfully in our high and holy position. True, we are the possessors of eternal life, the privileged subjects of that magnificent grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord; we are members of the body of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of eternal glory. But; does all this afford any warrant for neglecting the warning voice which Israel's history utters in our ears? Are we, because of our incomparably higher privileges, to walk carelessly and despise the wholesome admonitions which Israel's history supplies? God forbid! Nay, we are bound to give earnest heed to the things which the Holy Ghost has written for our learning. The higher our privileges, the richer our blessings, the nearer our relationship, the more does it become us the more solemnly are we bound to be faithful, and to seek, in all things, to carry ourselves in such a way as to be well-pleasing to Him who has called us into the very highest and most blessed place that even His perfect love could bestow. The Lord, in His great goodness, grant that we may, in true purpose of heart, ponder these things in His holy presence, and earnestly seek to serve Him with reverence and godly fear!

But we must proceed with our chapter.

At verse 26, we have a point of deepest interest in connection with the history of the divine dealings with Israel. "I said, I would scatter them into corners, I *would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men.*" And why did He not? The answer to this question presents a truth of infinite value and importance to Israel — a truth which lies at the very foundation of all their future blessing. No doubt, so far as they are concerned, they deserved to have their remembrance blotted out from among men. But God has His own thoughts, and counsels, and purposes respecting them; and not only so, but He takes account of the thoughts and the actings of the nations in reference to His people. This comes out with singular force and beauty at verse 27. He condescends to give us His reasons for not obliterating every trace of the sinful and rebellious people — and oh! what a touching reason it is! "*were it not what I feared the wrath of the enemy* lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this."

Can anything be more affecting than the grace that breathes in these words? God will not permit the nations to behave themselves strangely toward His poor erring people. He will use them as His rod of discipline, but the moment they attempt, in the indulgence of their own bitter animosity, to exceed

their appointed limit, He will break the rod in pieces, and make it manifest to all that He Himself is dealing with His beloved, though erring people, for their ultimate blessing and His glory.

This is a truth of unspeakable preciousness. It is the fixed purpose of Jehovah to teach all the nations of the earth that Israel has a special place in His heart, and a destined place of pre-eminence on the earth. This is beyond all question. The pages of the prophets furnish a body of evidence perfectly unanswerable on the point. If nations forget or oppose, so much the worse for them. It is utterly vain for them to attempt to countervail the divine purpose, for they may rest assured that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will confound every scheme formed against the people of His choice. Men may think, in their pride and folly, that their hand is high, but they will have to learn that God's hand is higher still.

But our space does not admit of our dwelling upon this deeply interesting subject; we must allow the reader to pursue it for himself, in the light of holy scripture. He will find it a most profitable and refreshing study. Most gladly would we accompany him through the precious pages of the prophetic scriptures, but we must just now confine ourselves to the magnificent song which is in itself a remarkable epitome of the entire teaching on the point — a brief, but comprehensive and impressive history of God's ways with Israel and Israel's ways with God, from first to last — a history strikingly illustrative of the great principles of grace, law, government and glory.

At verse 29, we have a very touching appeal. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would *consider their latter end*? How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." — There is, there can be but the one Rock, blessed, throughout all ages be His glorious Name! — "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps."

Terrible picture of a people's moral condition drawn by a master hand! Such is the divine estimate of the real state of all those whose rock was not as the Rock of Israel. But a day of vengeance *will* come. It is delayed, in long-suffering mercy, but it will come as sure as there is a God on the throne of heaven. A day is coming when those nations which have dealt proudly with Israel shall have to answer at the bar of the Son of man for their conduct, hear His solemn sentence, and meet His unsparing wrath.

"Is not this laid up in store with me, and *sealed up among my treasures*? To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the Lord shall judge [vindicate, defend or avenge] his people, and *repent himself for his servants*, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Precious grace for Israel, by-and-by — for each, for all, now, who feel and own their need!

"And he shall say, "Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted: which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal:" — wound in governmental wrath, and heal in pardoning grace; all homage to His great and holy Name, throughout the everlasting ages! — "neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever." — Glory be to God in the highest! Let all created intelligences adore His matchless Name! — "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgement," — as it most assuredly, will — "I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me" — whoever and wherever they are. Tremendous sentence for all whom it may concern — for all haters of God — all lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God! — "I will

make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, *from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.*"

Here we reach the end of the heavy record of judgement, wrath and vengeance, so briefly presented in this song of Moses, but so largely unfolded throughout the prophetic scriptures. The reader can refer, with much interest and profit, to Ezekiel 38 and 39, where we have the judgement of Gog and Magog, the great northern foe who is to come up, at the end, against the land of Israel and there meet his ignominious fall and utter destruction.

He may also turn to Joel 3 which opens with words of balm and consolation for the Israel of the future. "For behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." Thus he will see how perfectly the voices of the prophets harmonise with the song of Moses; and how fully, how clearly, and how unanswerably, in both the one and the other, does the Holy Ghost set forth and establish the grand truth of Israel's future restoration, supremacy and glory.

And then how truly delightful is the closing note of our song! How magnificently it places the topstone upon the whole superstructure! All the hostile nations are judged, under whatever style or title they appear upon the scene, whether it be Gog and Magog, the Assyrian, or the king of the north — all the foes of Israel shall be confounded and consigned to everlasting perdition, and then this sweet note falls upon the ear, "REJOICE, O YE NATIONS, WITH HIS PEOPLE; FOR HE WILL AVENGE THE BLOOD OF HIS SERVANTS, AND WILL RENDER VENGEANCE TO HIS ADVERSARIES, AND WILL BE MERCIFUL UNTO HIS LAND AND TO HIS PEOPLE"

Here ends this marvellous song, one of the very finest, fullest and most forcible utterances in the whole Volume of God. It begins and ends with God, and takes in, in its comprehensive range, the history of His earthly people Israel, past, present and future. It shows us the ordering of the nations in direct reference to the divine purpose as to the seed of Abraham. It unfolds the final judgement of all those nations that have acted or shall yet act in opposition to the chosen seed; and then when Israel is fully restored and blessed, according to the covenant made with their fathers, the saved nations are summoned to rejoice with them.

How glorious is all this! What a splendid circle of truths is presented to the vision of our souls in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy! Well may it be said, "God is the Rock, his work is perfect." Here the heart can rest, in holy tranquillity, come what may. Everything may go to pieces in man's hand; all that is merely human may and must issue in hopeless wreck and ruin; but "The Rock" shall stand for ever, and every "work" of the divine Hand shall shine in everlasting perfection to the glory of God and the perfect blessing of His people.

Such, then, is the song of Moses; such its scope, range and application. The intelligent reader does not need to be told that the church of God, the body of Christ, the mystery of which the blessed apostle Paul was made the minister, finds no place in this song. When Moses wrote this song, the mystery of the church lay hid in the bosom of God. If we do not see this, we are wholly incompetent to interpret or even to understand the holy scriptures. To a simple mind, taught exclusively by scripture, it is as clear as a sunbeam that the song of Moses has for its thesis the government of God, in connection with Israel and the nations; for its sphere, the earth; and for its centre, the land of Canaan.

"And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun. And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel; and he said unto

them, *Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.* For it is not a vain thing for you; because *it is your life;* and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Vers. 44-47.)

Thus, from first to last, through every section of this precious book of Deuteronomy, we find Moses, that beloved and most honoured servant of God, urging upon the people the solemn duty of implicit, unqualified, hearty obedience to the word of God. In this lay the precious secret of life, peace, progress, prosperity, all. They had nothing else to do but *obey*. Blessed business! Happy holy duty! May it be ours, beloved reader, in this day of conflict and confusion in the which man's will is so fearfully dominant. The world, and the so-called church are rushing on together, with appalling rapidity, along the dark pathway of self-will — a pathway which must end in the blackness of darkness for ever. Let us bear this in mind, and earnestly seek to tread the narrow path of simple obedience to all the precious commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus shall our hearts be kept in sweet peace; and although we may seem to the men of this world, and even to professing Christians to be odd and narrow-minded, let us not be moved, the breadth of a hair, from the path indicated by the word of God. May the word of Christ dwell in us richly, and the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, *until the end?*

It is very remarkable, and indeed eminently impressive, to find our chapter closing with another reference to Jehovah's governmental dealing with His beloved servant Moses. "And the Lord spake unto Moses *that self-same day*" — the very day in which he uttered his song in the ears of the people — "saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession; and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people; because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; *but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.*" (Vers. 48-52)

How solemn and soul-subduing is the government of God! Surely it ought to make the heart tremble at the very thought of disobedience. If such an eminent servant as Moses was judged for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, what will be the end of those who live from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, in deliberate and habitual neglect of the plainest commandments of God, and positive self-willed rejection of His authority?

Oh! for a lowly mind, a broken and contrite heart! This is what God looks for and delights in; it is with such He can make His blessed abode. "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." God in His infinite goodness, grant much of this sweet spirit to each of His beloved children, for Jesus Christ's sake!

Deuteronomy 33.

"And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death"

It is full of interest and comfort to find that the last words of the lawgiver were words of unmingled blessing. We have dwelt upon his various discourses, those solemn, searching and deeply affecting homilies addressed to the congregation of Israel. We have meditated upon that marvellous song with its mingled notes of grace and government. But we are now called to hearken to words of most precious benediction, words of sweetest comfort and consolation, words flowing from the very

heart of the God of Israel and giving His own loving thoughts respecting them, and His onlook into their glorious future.

The reader will, doubtless, notice a marked difference between the last words of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 33, and the last words of Jacob as given in Genesis 49. It is needless to say that both are given by the same pen, both divinely inspired; and hence, although they differ, they do not and cannot clash; there is — there can be no discrepancy between two sections of the Volume of God. This is a cardinal truth, a vital and fundamental principle with every devout Christian, every true believer — a truth to be tenaciously grasped and faithfully confessed, in the face of all the ignorant and insolent assaults of infidelity.

We are not, of course, going to enter upon an elaborate comparison of the two chapters; this would be impossible just now, on various grounds. We are obliged to be as concise and brief as possible. But there is one grand point of difference which can be seized at a glance. Jacob gives the history of the actings of his sons, some of them, alas! most sad and humiliating. Moses, on the contrary, presents the actings of divine grace, whether in them or toward them. This will, at once, account for the difference. The evil actings of Reuben, of Simeon, and of Levi are recorded by Jacob, but entirely omitted by Moses. Is this discrepancy? Nay; but divine harmony, Jacob views his sons in their personal history; Moses views them in their covenant relationship with Jehovah. Jacob gives us human failure, infirmity and sin; Moses gives us divine faithfulness, goodness and loving-kindness. Jacob gives us human actings and judgement thereon; Moses gives us divine counsels and unmingled blessing flowing out of them. Thanks and praise to our God, His counsels and His blessings and His glory are above and beyond all human failure, sin and folly. He will, ultimately, have it all His own way, and that for ever; then Israel and the nations shall be fully blessed, and shall rejoice together in the abundant goodness of God, and celebrate His praise from shore to shore, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

We shall now do little more than quote for the reader the various blessings of the tribes. They are full of most precious instruction, and do not call for much in the way of exposition.

"And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints [holy ones]; from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, *he loved the people*" precious, unfailing source of all their future blessing! — "*All his saints are in thy hand;*" — True secret of their perfect security! "And they sat down *at thy feet;*" — The only safe and proper attitude, for them, for us, for each, for all! — "Every one shall receive of thy words;" — Blessed boon! Precious treasure! Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord is more precious by far than thousands of gold and silver; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb — "Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. Let Reuben live and not die, and let not his men be few."

We have nothing here about Reuben's instability, nothing about his sin. Grace is in the ascendant; blessings are flowing in rich abundance from the loving heart of the One who delights to bless and to surround Himself with hearts filled to overflowing with the sense of His goodness.

"And this is the blessing of Judah; and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people; let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies." Judah is the royal line. "Our Lord sprang out of Judah," thus illustrating, in a truly marvellous manner, how divine grace rises, in its majesty, above human sin, and triumphs gloriously over circumstances which reveal man's utter weakness.

"Judas: begat Phares and Zara of Tamar!" Who but the Holy Spirit could have penned these

words? How plainly they declare that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts! What human hand would have introduced Tamar into the genealogical line of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Not one. The stamp of divinity is strikingly impressed on Matthew 1: 3, as it is upon every clause of the Holy Volume from beginning to end. The Lord be praised that it is so!

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes; his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk." (Gen. 49: 8-12.)

"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside; sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, *the Lion of tribe of Judah*, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood *a Lamb*, as it had been *slain*, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

How highly favoured is the tribe of Judah! Surely to be in the genealogical line from which our Lord sprang, is a high honour; and yet we know — for our Lord Himself has told us — that it is far higher, far more blessed to hear the word of God and keep it. To do the will of God, to treasure up in our hearts His precious commandments brings us morally nearer to Christ than even the fact of being of His kindred according to the flesh. (Matt 12: 46-50.)

"And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim [lights and perfections] be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; *who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant*. They shall teach Jacob thy judgements, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." (Vers. 8-11.)

The reader will notice the fact that Simeon is left out here, though so intimately associated with Levi in Genesis 49. "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for *in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall*. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

Now, when we compare Genesis 49 with Deuteronomy 33, we observe two things, namely, human responsibility, on the one hand; and divine sovereignty, on the other. Moreover, we see nature and its actings; grace and its fruits. Jacob looks at Simeon and Levi linked together in nature, and displaying nature's tempers and ways. So far as they were concerned, they both alike deserved the curse. But in Levi, we see the glorious triumphs of sovereign grace. It was grace which enabled Levi, in the days of the golden calf, to gird on the sword and stand for the glory of the God of Israel. "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And

all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." (Ex. 32: 26-29)

Where was Simeon, on this occasion? He was with Levi in the day of nature's self-will, fierce anger and cruel wrath; why not in the day of bold decision for Jehovah? He was ready to go with his brother to avenge a family insult, why not to vindicate the honour of God, insulted as it was by the idolatrous act of the whole congregation? Will any one say he was not responsible? Let such an one beware how he raises such a question. The call of Moses was addressed to the whole congregation; Levi alone responded; and he got the blessing. He stood for God, in a dark and evil day, and for this he was honoured with the priesthood — the very highest dignity that could be conferred upon him. The call was addressed to Simeon as well as to Levi, but Simeon did not respond. Is there any difficulty here? To a mere theologian there may be; but to a devout Christian, there is none. God is sovereign. He does as He pleases and gives none account of any of His matters. If any one feels disposed to ask, "Why is Simeon omitted in Deuteronomy 33?" The simple and conclusive answer is, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" In Simeon, we see nature's actings judged; in Levi, we see the fruits of grace rewarded; in both we see God's truth vindicated and His Name glorified. Thus it ever has been; thus it is, and thus it shall be. Man is responsible; God is sovereign. Are we called upon to reconcile these two propositions? Nay; we are called to believe them; they are reconciled already, inasmuch as they appear side by side on the page of inspiration. This is enough for every pious mind; and as for cavillers, they will get their definitive answer, by-and-by.*

{*For further remarks on the tribe of Levi, the reader is referred to "Notes on the book of Exodus," chapter 32. "Notes on the book of Numbers," chapters 3, 4 and 8. Also a small pamphlet, first published in the year 1846, entitled, "The History of the Tribe of Levi Considered."}

"And of Benjamin" — "the son of my right hand" — he said, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." Blessed place for Benjamin! Blessed place for each beloved child of God! How precious is the thought of dwelling in safety in the divine presence, in conscious nearness to the true and faithful Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, day and night abiding under the covert of his sheltering wings.

"How blest are they who still abide,
Close sheltered by Thy watchful side;
Who life and strength from Thee receive,
And with Thee move and in Thee live."

Reader, seek to know, more and more, the reality and blessedness of Benjamin's place and portion. Be not satisfied with anything short of the enjoyed presence of Christ, the abiding sense of relationship and nearness to Him. Be assured of it, it is your happy privilege. Let nothing rob you of it. Keep ever near the Shepherd's side, reposing in His love, lying down in the green pastures and beside the still waters. The Lord grant that the writer and the reader may prove the deep blessedness of this, in this day of hollow profession and empty talk! May we know the unspeakable preciousness of deep personal intimacy with Himself! This is the special need of the day in which our lot is cast — a day of so much intellectual traffic in truth, but of so little heart knowledge and true appreciation of Christ.

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Joseph is a very remarkable type of Christ. We have dwelt upon his history in our studies on the book of Genesis. The reader will notice the emphatic way in which Moses speaks of the fact of his having been separated from his brethren. He was rejected and cast into the pit. He passed, in figure, through the deep waters of death, and thus reached the place of dignity and glory. He was raised from the dungeon to be ruler over the land of Egypt, and the preserver and sustainer of his brethren. The iron entered into his soul, and he was made to taste the bitterness of the place of death ere he entered the sphere of glory. Striking type of Him who hung upon the cross, lay in the grave, and is now on the throne of the majesty of heaven.

We cannot but be struck with the fullness of the blessing pronounced upon Joseph, both by Moses, in Deuteronomy 33 and by Jacob, in Genesis 49. Jacob's utterance is uncommonly fine. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well," — Exquisitely beautiful figure! — "whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (*from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel*) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Magnificent range of blessing! And all this flowing from and based upon his sufferings. It is needless to say that all these blessings will be made good in the experience of Israel, by-and-by. The sufferings of the true Joseph will form the imperishable foundation of the future blessedness of His brethren in the land of Canaan; and not only so but the tide of blessing, deep and full, shall flow forth from that highly favoured though now desolate land, in refreshing virtue into all the earth. "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be." Bright and blessed prospect for Jerusalem, for the land of Israel, and for the whole earth! What a sad mistake to apply such scriptures to the gospel dispensation or to the church of God! How contrary to the testimony of holy scripture — to the heart of God and to the mind of Christ!

"And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand."

Zebulun is to rejoice in his going forth, and Issachar in abiding in his tents. It will be joy at home and abroad; and there will be power to act on others also — calling the people unto the mountain to offer the sacrifices of righteousness. All this grounded upon the fact that they themselves shall suck of the abundance of the seas and of hidden treasures. Thus it is always in principle. It is our privilege to rejoice in the Lord, come what may, and to draw from those eternal springs and hidden treasures that

are to be found in Himself. Then shall we be in a condition of soul to call others to taste and see that the Lord is good; and, not only so, but to present to God those sacrifices of righteousness so acceptable to Him.

"And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgements with Israel. And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan. And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord: possess thou the west and the south. And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days thy strength. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Vers. 20-29.)

Truly we may say human comment is uncalled for here. Nothing can exceed the preciousness of the grace that breathes in the closing lines of our book. The blessings of this chapter, like the song of chapter 33. begin and end with God and His marvellous ways with Israel. It is refreshing and comforting, beyond expression, at the close of all the appeals, all the exhortations, all the solemn warnings, all the faithful declarations, all the prophetic records as to failure and sin, judgement and governmental wrath — after all these, to listen to such accents as those which we have just penned. It is indeed a most magnificent termination to this blessed book of Deuteronomy. Grace and glory shine out with uncommon lustre. God will yet be glorified in Israel, and Israel fully and for ever blessed in God. Nothing can hinder this. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He will make good every jot and tittle of His precious word to Israel. The last words of the lawgiver bear the clearest and fullest testimony to all this. Had we nothing but the last four verses of the precious chapter on which we have been dwelling, they would be amply sufficient to prove, beyond all question, the future restoration, blessing, pre-eminence and glory of the twelve tribes of Israel in their own land.

True it is — blessedly true — that the Lord's people now can draw instruction, comfort and refreshment from the blessings pronounced upon Israel. Blessed be God, we can know what it is to be "satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord." We may take comfort from the assurance that "as our days shall be our strength." We too can say, "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." We can say all this and much more. We can say what Israel never could and never can say. The church's blessings and privileges are all heavenly and spiritual; but that does not hinder our taking comfort from the promises made to Israel. The grand mistake of professing Christians is in applying to the church exclusively what most manifestly applies to God's earthly people. We must, once more, earnestly entreat the Christian reader to watch against this serious error. He need not be in the least afraid of losing anything of His own special blessing by leaving to the seed of Abraham the place and the portion assigned them by the counsels and promises of God; on the contrary, it is only when these are clearly understood and fully acknowledged that we can make an intelligent use of the entire canon of Old Testament scripture. We may lay it down as a great root principle that no one can possibly understand or interpret scripture who does not clearly recognise the grand distinction between Israel and the church of God.

Deuteronomy 34.

This brief chapter forms an inspired postscript to the book of Deuteronomy. We are not told who was employed as the instrument in the hand of the inspiring Spirit; but this is a matter of no moment to the devout student of holy scripture. We are fully persuaded that the postscript is as truly inspired as the book, and the book as the Pentateuch; and the Pentateuch as the whole Volume of God.

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top, of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

In our studies on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, we have had occasion to dwell upon the very solemn and, we may truly add, soul subduing fact recorded in the above quotation. It will not therefore be needful to add many words in this our closing section. We would merely remind the reader that, if he would have a full understanding of the whole subject, he must look at Moses in a twofold aspect, namely, officially and personally.

Now, looking at this beloved and honoured man in his official capacity, it is very plain that it lay not in his province to conduct the congregation of Israel into the promised land. The wilderness was his sphere of action; it pertained not to him to lead the people across the river of death, into their destined inheritance. His ministry was connected with man's responsibility under law and the government of God, and hence it never could lead the People into the enjoyment of the promise. It was reserved for his successor to do this. Joshua, a type of the risen Saviour, was God's appointed instrument to lead His people across the Jordan, and plant them in their divinely given inheritance.

All this is plain and deeply interesting; but we must look at Moses personally as well as officially; and here, too, we must view him in a twofold aspect, as the subject of government and the object of grace. We must never lose sight of this most important distinction. It runs all through scripture, and is strikingly illustrated in the history of many of the Lord's beloved people and of His most eminent servants. The subject of grace and government demands the reader's most profound attention. We have dwelt upon it again and again, in the course of our studies; but no words of ours could adequately set forth its moral importance and immense practical value. We consider it one of the weightiest and most seasonable subjects that could possibly engage the attention of the Lord's people, at the present moment.

It was the government of God which, with stern decision, forbade the entrance of Moses into the Promised land, much as he longed to do so. He spoke unadvisedly with his lips; he failed to glorify God in the eyes of the congregation at the waters of Meribah, and for this he was forbidden to cross the Jordan and plant his foot on the promised land.

Let us deeply ponder this, beloved Christian reader. Let us see that we fully apprehend its moral force and practical application. It is surely with the greatest tenderness and delicacy that we would refer to the failure of one of the most beloved and illustrious of the Lord's servants; but it has been recorded for our learning and solemn admonition, and therefore we are bound to give earnest heed to it. We should ever remember that we, too, though under grace, are also the subjects of divine government. We

are here on this earth, in the place of solemn responsibility, under a government which cannot be trifled with. True, we are children of the Father, loved with an infinite and everlasting love — loved even as Jesus is loved. We are members of the body of Christ, loved, cherished and nourished according to all the perfect love of His heart. There is no question of responsibility here, no possibility of failure; all is divinely settled, divinely sure; but we are the subjects of divine government also. Let us never, for one moment, lose sight of this. Let us beware of one-sided and pernicious notions of grace. The very fact of our being objects of divine favour and love, children of God, members of Christ, should lead us to yield all the more reverent attention to the divine government.

To use an illustration drawn from human affairs, her Majesty's children should, above all others, just because they are her children, respect her government; and were they, in any way, to transgress her laws, the dignity of government would be strikingly illustrated by their being made to pay the penalty. If they, because of being the queen's children, were to be allowed to transgress with impunity the enactments of her Majesty's government, it would be simply exposing the government to public contempt, and affording a warrant to all her subjects to do the same. And if it be thus in the case of a human government, how much more in the government of God! "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, *therefore* will I punish you for your iniquities." "The time is come that judgement must *begin at the house of God*: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Solemn fact! Solemn inquiry! May we ponder them deeply.

But, as we have said, Moses was the subject of grace, as well as of government; and truly that grace shines with special lustre on the top of Pisgah. There the venerable servant of God was permitted to stand in his Master's presence, and, with undimmed eye, survey the land of promise, in all its fair proportions. He was permitted to see it from a divine stand-point — see it, not merely as possessed by Israel, but as given by God.

And what then? He fell asleep and was gathered to his people. He died, not as a withered and feeble old man, but in all the freshness and vigour of matured manhood. "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Striking testimony! Rare fact in the annals of our fallen race! The life of Moses was divided into three important and strongly marked periods of forty years each. He spent forty years in the house of Pharaoh; forty years "at the backside of the desert;" and forty years in the wilderness. Marvellous life! Eventful history! How instructive! How suggestive! How rich in its lessons from first to last! How profoundly interesting the study of such a life! To trace him from the river's brink where he lay a helpless babe, up to the top of Pisgah where he stood, in company with his Lord, to gaze with undimmed vision upon the fair inheritance of the Israel of God; and to see him again on the mount of Transfiguration in company with his honoured fellow-servant Elias, "talking with Jesus" on the grandest theme that could possibly engage the attention of men or angels. Highly favoured man! Blessed servant! Marvellous vessel!

And then let us hearken to the divine testimony to this most beloved man Of God. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight Of all Israel."

May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, bless our study of the book of Deuteronomy! May its precious lessons be engraved upon the tablets of our hearts with the eternal pen of the Holy Ghost, and produce their proper result in forming our character, governing our conduct and shaping our way

through this world! May we earnestly seek to tread with a humble spirit and firm step, the narrow path of obedience, till travelling days are done! C. H. M.