

*A favored Land under peculiar obligations to religious Praise and Gratitude.*

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# A SERMON,

DELIVERED UPON THE

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## *A Thanksgiving Sermon.*

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DEUTERONOMY viii. 10.

*When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee.*

THE time approaching when Moses must die, he, good man, expressed his concern for the people of his charge, and, therefore, on a certain day, in the fortieth year from their departure out of Egypt, being then encamped on the plains of Moab, by the banks of the river Jordan, he called them together, and at different times made two very tender and moving addresses to them, wherein he briefly related all that had befallen their fathers, since the time they left Egypt—the gracious dealings of God towards them—their frequent murmurings and rebellions against him—and the many severe judgments that had followed thereupon. He gave them a summary of all the laws which the divine goodness had calculated for their happiness ; and having rehearsed the Decalogue almost word for word, he reminded them of the solemn and awful manner in which it was delivered from Mount Sinai ; and of the manifold obligations laid upon them, to a strict observance of it : He entreated them to be faithful to God : He assures them, on the one hand, that if they kept his commandments, they should not fail of having innumerable blessings heaped upon them ; and, on the other, that if they

they wickedly departed from them, all manner of troubles and calamities would overtake them. These things Moses not only delivered to the People by word of mouth, but ordered to be written in a Book, which he committed to the care of the Levites, to deposit in the Ark of the Covenant, to remain a witness against the Children of Israel, in case they should prove disobedient and rebellious.

AMONG the many directions given them, relative to their future conduct, we may reckon the one which is contained in the text ; “ When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee.” Here we may note,

1st. THE duty enjoined upon Israel, viz. to bless the Lord their God. “ Thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.”—For *men* to bless God sometimes signifies to extol and magnify him, for the infinite excellencies and perfections of his nature ; as Psalms civ. 1, 2, “ Bless the Lord O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great ; thou art clothed with honor and majesty ; who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.” And sometimes it signifies to give him thanks for mercies and benefits received : Psalms ciii. 2, “ Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits.” To bless God in the text may be considered, perhaps, as requiring of us to praise God for his glorious excellencies and perfections ; but more particularly to render him thanks for his mercies.

2ndly. For what must Israel bless God ? For “ the good land given them.” The goodness of the ~~land~~ *Land* Moses describes in the preceding context : He sets it forth to be a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of the hills, a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees, and pomgranates ; a land of oil olive, and honey ; a land

land where they should eat bread without scarceness, and should not lack any thing in it ; and a land whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills they might dig brass. And we add, a land distinguished not only by the richness and variety of its productions, but a land to be distinguished by the light of God’s word, and the enjoyment of divine ordinances, and a free government. This is the good land which the People of Israel were, by the direction in our text, to bless or give thanks to God for : But when are they more especially called to perform this duty ? The text says, “ When thou hast eaten and art full ;” i. e. “ When they had entered in and taken possession of the land, and under the protection and smiles of Heaven, enjoyed the fruits, immunities and privileges of it. Whenever this should become their case, they were to bless God, and thankfully acknowledge their good land, and good things, as flowing altogether from his distinguishing mercy and goodness, and render to him the praise and gratitude due to his great name.

BUT were the People of Israel, among the numerous branches of the great Family of Man, throughout all generations, I say were the People of Israel alone, under obligations to religious praise and gratitude for their good land ?—Are not the people of this land under peculiar obligations of this kind ? May it not be said that we have a good land ?—That this is truly the case, and that we are under peculiar obligations to make our thankful acknowledgments to God, will now be subjects of our illustration and improvement. That we have a good land, it is thought will sufficiently appear from the following considerations.

1st. ON account of climate.—These American States are situated in a climate that is comparatively temperate, with respect to heat and cold. We are not placed either in a frigid or torrid zone, but in a middle climate, between the frigid and

and torrid zones. We have summer and winter, cold and heat ; but we experience not the freezing severity of the cold regions of the North, nor the continued burning heat of the South. Could we take a tour to the North and visit Iceland, then tread our steps back, and extend them to some equatorial region, and after these experiments return to our native latitude, we should doubtless felicitate ourselves on account of our situation, and say, with respect to climate, we have a goodly land. We are liable to diseases and death ; but perhaps our climate is as favorable to health, vigor, and longevity as any on this earthly globe. Contagious disorders have raged in some of our most populous places, in some few years past, and made wide ravages among their inhabitants. But these mortal epidemics being principally confined to cities and populous places, rather shew that they are not to be imputed to a general insalubrity of the air of the climate, but that there are natural causes thereof, existing in such places, and are such appendages as cannot easily be separated from them.

*2ndly.* WE have a good land on account of relative situation ; or on account of our situation with respect to the powerful nations of Europe. It is supposed to be 3000 miles across the Atlantic, a distance not so great but that we can keep up commercial connections, and carry on traffic ; but yet a distance so great as serves, in some measure, for our defence. This was one circumstance, among others, which, in the late revolutionary war with Great-Britain, was, under God's government, a mean of our preservation. Britain, in the pride of her power, despised the idea of our being equal to a conflict with her warriors. And truly we were nothing to them in point of military skill and power ; and had we been placed in their vicinity, they might have easily obtained victory over us ; but being at such a distance from us, tho' they

they had ships of war and transports, <sup>many</sup> ~~and money~~, yet they found themselves so embarrassed and baffled, that they yielded to us in the conflict, and consented to our Independence. We do not pretend to say that our distance from the powers of Europe will secure us from their invasions. Yet this we say, that should this be the case, the distance lays them under great disadvantages, and is therefore a circumstance much in our favor. In this respect then we have a good land.

*3rdly.* WE have a good land on account of the natural fertility of the soil. We cannot, as yet, make our boast of mines of Gold and Silver, tin and brass. These precious mettles are not washed down from the mountains and hills, nor mix with the sands below, to be gathered at pleasure ; yet we have natural sources of national wealth, such, perhaps, as are more conducive to national happiness, than the richest mines would be. Among our natural sources we may reckon the fertility of our soil. The face of our extensive land is composed of mountains, hills and vallies. On the grassy mountains the sheep and oxen graze and fatten—in the vallies grow the corn in pleasing luxuriance. We cannot boast of vineyards, nor of oil olive, nor of the growth of figs or pomgranates ; but yet we have almost all those productions of the earth, which constitute the necessities of life in rich profusion. The art of Husbandry is not carried to that pitch of perfection in America, that it is in Europe ; yet the industrious and economical citizens of America live, as to necessities, as well as the Lords of Europe. Besides the ample supply of her own inhabitants, America has abundance to spare, as the yearly bills of exports testify. Surely when we consider these things we must say we have a good land.

*4thly.* WE have a good land on account of a free government. No people now on earth enjoy a government more free

free. Like that which God instituted for his peculiar people of old, it is a *Republic*. It has the principal feature of that constitution, in that our rulers are to be chosen to office by the people, and from ourselves. It gives equal liberty to all : It affords excitement to all to cultivate and display genius.— The doctrine of any ones having an *hereditary* right to rule is not received—it is rejected as enormous. The way to preferment, according to the spirit of our government, is merit. A foundation is laid in government to make us the most happy of all people. We were once happy in connection with Great-Britain ; but the King and Parliament shewing a strong disposition, and determined resolution to infringe upon our natural and chartered rights, it was thought we could be happy no longer in that connection. We claimed an independent government, and Heaven has hitherto supported our claim. Here are seventeen States united together under one general Constitution, and each State enjoying a Constitution of her own ; and all these deliberately framed, peaceably accepted, and most generally obeyed.

A PEOPLE enjoying a government mild and liberal like that of America, will be happy in their social capacity, so long as they are wise and virtuous. They may become corrupt and vicious ; in that case they will be liable to be influenced by private connections, party spirit, bribery and flattery, or by the arts of crafty and designing men. When this is the case, they let go their security, lose their liberty and plunge into bondage. May Heaven avert these evils from America !

5thly. WE have a good land on account of literary institutions for the instruction and education of youth. Man is born like a wild Ass's Colt. When he first appears in the world, he seems less rational than many of the lower animals.

als. He has, however, an intellectual spark implanted within him by the Father of Light. This lies hidden until gradually drawn forth. Education will do this. The new-born babe that seems incapable of knowing any thing, may yet like Newton, measure the stars, traverse the path of the wandering comets, and calculate their revolutions with precision.— Education is necessary even for a state of civilization—it is certainly necessary for the important public offices of civilized life. The intellectual powers of man uneducated, lie dormant ; they may be like gold in the ore. Education refines them and makes them fit for use. Well, we have literary institutions of every grade for the instruction of youth. Our Towns and Villages are furnished with Schools ; our Counties with Academies ; our States with Colleges and Universities. No one, that has a genius and a thirst for knowledge, need be a wild boy of the woods. Every one may qualify himself for the duties of a common citizen ; many for the higher offices of public life. There may be those that condemn these things as trifles ; but they are privileges to be highly prized and diligently improved, and on account of them we have a good land.

6thly. WE have a good land in that we are favored with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the free enjoyment of its privileges.

LET Deists mock and proud scoffers sneer at the gospel with all its institutions and tenders of love and mercy ; still those who have any regard for the welfare and prosperity of States and Kingdoms ; those who have any regard for their own souls, and the souls of their fellow-men, and any regard for the glory of God, will esteem the gospel the greatest blessing a people can enjoy ; for it tends to promote all the above great and good things which they regard and desire. It is calculated

calculated and tends to promote individual good ; yea the everlasting salvation of individuals, and the glory of God.— But what I shall insist upon at present is, that the gospel is calculated and tends to promote the peace and tranquility, welfare and happiness of states and kingdoms, where it is enjoyed. This it doth, by inculcating all those virtues that sweeten the spirits and lay the passions and animosities which sometimes arise among men ; more particularly by enjoining upon us to love our neighbours, that is every man in the world, as ourselves ; to be kind to one another ; ready to oblige those we are conversant with ; to be tender hearted and compassionate to such as are in want and trouble, and ready at all times to afford relief ; to mourn with those that mourn, and rejoice with those that rejoice ; to bear one another's burdens and forbear one another in love ; and to forgive our enemies, and bless them that curse us. And it tends to promote public peace and happiness, by recommending the important rule of doing to others as we would that others should do to us ; by commanding obedience to reasons laws which are just and good ; and by forbidding whatever is contrary to these, viz. violence and fraud, treachery, breach of trusts, oaths and promises, undutifulness to superiors, sedition and rebellion against lawful authority ; and if there be any thing else that is apt to disturb the public peace and alienate the affections of men from one another, it is forbidden by the gospel. These are some of the precepts and prohibitions of the gospel.— And there could be nothing devised more proper and effectual to procure the tranquillity of men's minds, and to promote the peace and happiness of states and kingdoms, and of the world ; and that, not only as the observance of these precepts and prohibitions, has a *natural* tendency to peace and happiness, but as *God*, in consequence of a due observance of them, will not fail to remove all troubles and calamities, and bestow

all

all those blessings which are necessary to constitute social and public happiness.

THESE are some of the principal considerations on account of which we have a goodly land. I come now to shew that on account of the good land we enjoy we are under obligations to bless God ; that is, to speak of his excellencies and to make him our most thankful acknowledgements.

HAVE we cause to felicitate ourselves on account of climate and relative situation ; and have our lines fallen in a fruitful land ; whose goodness, whose hand and counsel are to be acknowledged in all these happy circumstances ? Most certainly God's. " The most high, that divideth to the nations of the earth their inheritance, and sets the bounds of every man's habitation," has given us our lot in this good, pleasant, and privileged land. That we had not our earthly existence with the wretched inhabitants of Lapland, or on the burning sands and under the scorching sun of Arabia, must be resolved wholly to the holy, wise and benevolent sovereignty of God. Our enjoyment of the gospel and means of education, we derive from the same source. As individuals we are bound in duty to say, what have we that we have not received. The same humble language becomes nations. Personal and national blessings flow from Gods infinite goodness. Gods dominion is over all : He is King of nations as well as of individuals. Are nations liberally furnished with the means of public and private happiness, Gods mercy is to be thankfully acknowledged.

GOD, who gave us this land and made it good on the above mentioned account, continues us in the possession of our inheritance, and in the enjoyment of our invaluable rights and privileges. Enemies we have had, who have invaded

us,



us, troubled and distressed us ; but we were defended, delivered, exalted. We pass not along without divine corrections and rebukes ; but we may sing of mercy, as well as judgment. With our goodly heritage, God continues his smiles upon our husbandry, fishery and trade. The earth annually yields her increase. The labor of the husbandman has *this* year been crowned with success. The health of some of our towns has been interrupted by a mortal sickness in the season past ; but it has been generally enjoyed, and where it was denied, it is now restored. God smiles upon our literary institutions—they flourish—we enjoy peace and its pleasant fruits :—But the greatest token for good, is the success of the gospel, appearing in the awakening, conviction and conversion of sinners to God. A general revival of religion would ensure us of every national prosperity and happiness. Says God, concerning his people of old, “ O that they would fear me and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children after them.” The revivals that have taken place in these Northern States and in the Southern, are a token for good ; that God has not utterly forsaken us ; but that he remembers us still, with his loving kindness and tender mercy. O that God would revive his work more and more, and cause us, as a people, to fear him and keep his commandments.

THE bestowment of favors always confers obligations upon the receiver. We, in this land, ~~live~~ <sup>live</sup> under the strongest obligations to religious praise and gratitude to God, our kind patron and benefactor. Were we an innocent, virtuous people, yet we should be unworthy of all Gods mercies that he has bestowed upon us. How unworthy then seeing we are a sinful people !—There are many in the land, we hope, who walk before God and are upright—more, we fear, regard not God nor the divine Redeemer, and are walking according

cording to the sight of their own eyes and desires of their own hearts. The more unworthy we are of the blessings of Heaven, the greater obligations are conferred upon us, by their bestowment upon us and their continuance unto us.—“ What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits,” was the enquiry of the pious Psalmist, and will be the enquiry of every American, of a pious, an ingenuous mind.

RELIGIOUS gratitude is the debt we owe to God for his benefits. Religious gratitude, what is it ?—It is a comprehension of holy love and obedience to God—a gratitude of less comprehension falls short of that which is due to God for his favors. True gratitude always acknowledges our dependence upon God—acknowledges God as the giver of every good thing we enjoy, whether of a public or private nature—acknowledges our infinite unworthiness and ill-desert. The truly grateful man feels humble for and ashamed of his sins, under the reception and enjoyment of Gods mercies—he feels indebted and obliged, and disposed to make *such* returns to God his benefactor, as he believes to be well pleasing in his sight. Being fully convinced that holy love, praise and obedience are the only sacrifices that God is, through Christ, well pleased with ; and being fully sensible that God is an infinitely worthy, excellent, glorious Being ; and having a lively sense of his loving kindness and tender mercies, he feels constrained to bless God—to speak of his glorious excellencies, and thankfully to acknowledge his kindness—to repent of his sins—to believe in Christ, and to bring forth those fruits of holiness, which are to the praise and glory of his grace. This is the nature and fruit of true religious gratitude. This is a debt we should every day of our lives be paying : Yet a debt from which we never shall be discharged, because Gods mercy endureth forever.

THE design of this day of Thanksgiving is not that we may indulge ourselves in vain mirth, merriment and dissipation ; these are sacrifices which God abhors. The design of this day is not barely to appear publicly in his house of worship ; nor to feast plentifully at our tables ; but to yield a tribute of sincere gratitude to God for his manifold mercies.

To keep a day of Thanksgiving, in a religious manner, at the close of the year, we are urged, by the example of our pious ancestors, by the supreme authority of the State, and by the fitness and reasonableness of the thing. Nature points out the duty of religious praise and gratitude : We are endowed with reason, and are capable of observing the merciful works of God ; and we have the faculty of speech, and therefore a capacity of expressing the grateful sentiments of our hearts. Even the wicked love those that love them, and do good to those that do good to them. This is natural.—If gratitude to one another is a dictate of nature, shall not reason and religion lead up our hearts in love and gratitude to God ?—All nature around us admonisheth us of the propriety of making returns to God for benefits received. The inland waters are discharged into the sea from whence they are derived—the clouds remit in plentiful rains, the water exhaled from earth and sea in vapors—the fields bring forth fruits meet for those by whom they are dressed—there is a beautiful interchange of kind offices in the works of creation. Shall we be delinquent in our returns to God, the source of all our good ?

A DISPOSITION to habitual gratitude goes far to make the present life happy. It diminishes the cares, eases the burdens, assuages the griefs of life, ~~soothes~~ <sup>crosses</sup> the mind from gloomy darkness, and inspires the heart with serenity and joy.

joy. Ingratitude has an influence directly the reverse :—It is sullen, peevish, envious and malicious ; it deprives us of satisfaction in the enjoyment of every favor ; it gives an additional sting to every evil. Religious praise and gratitude has been the delightful work of saints on earth, and is the employment of Angels in Heaven. Let us then bless God, and give thanks always in every thing, through Jesus Christ, that we may be here prepared, and hereafter admitted, to join the happy spirits above, in ascribing blessing and honor, and glory and power, and thanksgiving, to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever—AMEN.