

Deuteronomy Chapter 31 Commentary

1 And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. 2 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.

"an hundred and twenty years old" We are reminded of the faithfulness of God to his word, as seen in: **Ge 6:3 "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."** Isn't it amazing, that God foreknew, that Moses would be 120 years old, when he had accomplished the work that he had set for him to do? It is also true for us today; whatsoever work God has for us to accomplish, he has provided the time necessary to get it done.

"I can no more go out and come in:" It is the time appointed for Joshua to take my place. It is time for Moses to die, and he is reminding Israel; God has kept the promise of 120 years, and now I must pass from this life. Not only is the age limit of my life reached, but I messed up one time in my life and as punishment, God will not let me pass over Jordan into the land of promise. **"Thou shalt not go over this Jordan."**

3 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.

Moses reaffirms that God has appointed Joshua to take Moses's place in leadership of Israel. However, notice what Moses tells Israel; God will go over before you and God will destroy these nations before you. Moses is reminding Israel, that neither he nor Joshua are the deliverers. All the deliverance is and will be from God.

This is a good lesson for us today in living the Christian life. Our deliverance is not from any minister or other person, it is from God who goes before us. After all, didn't Christ Jesus teach us in:

- **Mt 16:24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."** **"If any man will come after me"** We see that Christ is the leader and man the follower.
- **Mr 8:34 "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."** **"and follow me"** We see that Jesus is the leader and man the follower.
- **Mr 10:21 "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."** **"and follow me"** We see that Jesus is the leader and man the follower.
- **Lu 9:23 "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."** **"and follow me"** We see that Jesus is the leader and man the follower.

These scriptures teach us the same thing Moses is telling Israel. As God will go before Israel; Christ has gone before us, has delivered us from the nation of sin and satan, and given to us the possession of the land of promise, the church of Salvation by Grace.

How do we know that God has gone before us? When were you born again? While you were dead and alienated from God. Christ acted first by giving you new life, a resurrection for the dead, and then you could react by following him. Don't forget that he told us in **Lu 9:23; "and take up his cross daily, and follow me."** This is not a onetime act of obedience but a continual obedience all the days of our lives.

4 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. 5 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. 6 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.

Moses shows Israel; see what God did to Sihon, to Og, and to the Amorites? God will do the same to the inhabitants of the land of promise, and their property shall become yours. Do not miss that Israel is to do unto them everything that God has commanded. Again, we see an **"if"** covenant. Israel must perform according to God's commandments, or God will not go before them and give the enemies to them.

Moses reminds them to not be disobedient to God, and not to be afraid of their enemies in the land of promise. He reminds them; God will destroy the enemies in the land of promise; as he has just done for you here. Also, we have the recurrent thought, of the admonition; for their failure to believe God, when he commanded them to go into the land of promise the first time; the resultant disobedience, and the forty years of destruction in the wilderness.

We have similar commandments in the New Testament scriptures in:

- **Mt 28:10 "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."** This was told to the women, who went to Jesus's sepulcher, to tell Jesus's disciples that he would meet them in a specified place. The same is true for us; the church is to declare this is the place to see Jesus.
- **Lu 12:4-5; 4 "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."** Christ tells us; if you are in the land of promise, doing the things I have told you to do, you have nothing to fear. Even if they kill your body and persecute you; you have the promise of the eternal life and rest in the place I have prepared for you.

7 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. 8 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.

Moses reminds Joshua; you can count of God doing according to his word of promise. You have a large task set before you in conquering the land of promise; be not afraid, trust fully in God, and he will make it all happen. We have the same promises today in the New Testament church. This commandment is sure to the ministry and the laity of the church.

"Be strong and of a good courage:" We have here a command that is pertinent to us today. Christ tell us **"be not afraid"** twelve times in the New Testament. Here are a couple that teach us the same thing that Moses is saying to Joshua here:

- **Lu 12:4 "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."**
- **1Pe 3:14-16; 14 "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."**

Joshua can expect to meet with odds that seem insurmountable. In this reference: Christ is coming to his disciples, walking on the tempestuous sea, and he tells them **"be not afraid."** He tells us; sometimes life will seem to overwhelm you and when it does just look to me. I am still at the helm and will guide you safely through.

9 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.

Again, we have confirmation; God has commanded Moses to keep a written record of all the happenings and commandments of God. We notice that the writing was delivered to the priests and the elders. This is true for all the born-again children of God today; God's word of truth is for all of God's people. The commandment of God, to the priests and elders to teach Israel, is comparative to the duty of the ministers and elders of the church to teach the whole word of God, the true bible, which we recognize is the King James translation of the bible.

10 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, 11 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. 12 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: 13 And that their children, which have not known any thing, 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.

God tells Israel, in the seventh year of occupation of the land of promise, you are to have a gathering of all Israel in the place God chooses, and you are to read all this written testimony to every person that is occupying the land of promise. Why does God command this? Because in seven years they will have more children born who are now old enough to hear and obey commandments; there would be strangers that have become a part of Israel, and they too need to know the laws and statutes of God, and those who have heard it all before need to hear it again.

I know that it is true in my own life, and the lives of many others, that biblical illiteracy is a stumbling block to faithful service to God and Christ. The bible should be read and taught to every, man, woman, and child. Why children? **"that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God,"** This should first happen in the home by the parents teaching their children. This should also happen in the church, ensuring that all, especially parents,

have a correct understanding, and are well grounded in knowledge of the word of God, insuring they are teaching their children the rightly divided truth of God's Word.

Finally, you don't have to teach children to do wrong. They have the inherit sin nature, which the world, and the devil, will be steadily teaching, and tempting, them to participate in sin, and the ways of sinfulness. Children, therefore, need to be grounded in the whole truth of God, just as soon as they can hear. We cannot save our children eternally, but we can teach them the truth of God's word. The Holy Spirit will do the effectual work of causing them to be born-again and giving eternal life. If we fail in teaching our children God's truths, their blood will be required at our own hands.

Women are not to be preachers, in the sense of serving in the public ministry, as seen in: **1Ti 3:2 "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"** This limits the office to the male sex. However, the women are instructed many times to be teachers of other younger women and of children, but not in public ministry.

Women are to be teachers at home as seen in: **1Ti 5:14 "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."** The phrase "**guide the house**" is from the Greek word oikodespoteo (pronounced; oy-kod-es-pot-eh'-o) and means; *to be the head of (i.e., rule) a family: guide the house*. This text charges mothers with the responsibility of being head of the house. This responsibility would include teaching the children at home: schooling them in the truth of God.

Just because the mothers are instructed to teach the children; does not relieve the man of his responsibility to teach the children also, because we find in: **Eph 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."** the word nurture is from the Greek word; paideia (pronounced; pahee-di'-ah) and means: *tutorage, i.e. education or training; by implication, disciplinary correction: chastening, chastisement, instruction, nurture*. Thus, we are taught that both parents are responsible, in teaching the children the truths of God's word, the bible.

It is my own life experience: it was mother who taught me the most about God, and the reverent fear we are to have for him. She faithfully taught us children: sin against God would take us to hell, and she gave vivid descriptions of the awfulness of the eternal lake of fire. Praise the Lord! for faithful mothers and fathers, who are diligent to do God's bidding in raising up children.

14 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.

We notice; God is going to give Joshua his charge of duty in leading Israel. Since we don't read of Joshua's charge being repeated, we discern; Moses went out and taught Israel the song and Joshua stayed in the tabernacle. "**that I may give him a charge**" We see that God begins speaking to Moses in verse 16 and does not mention Joshua until verse 23. Verse 23 is all of God's charge to Joshua that we see. I believe that God had a private consultation with Joshua. After all, God charged Moses privately for the task set before him to accomplish, and God charges each individual minister of his call and duty

in the work that God would have him to accomplish. God also does this for each individual member of the church of the living God.

We have some scriptural support this thought: **Heb 8:10-11; 10** *"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: 11 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."* Every born-again child of God has inscribed in their hearts and placed in their minds the commandment, the charge, of God. This is done by the power of God through the Holy Spirit presence in our born-again souls and spirits. After all: Christ Jesus is a personal Saviour to each child of God.

15 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. **16** 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. **17** 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? **18** 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.

The foreknowledge of God is demonstrated here. Israel will indeed turn to idolatry and forsake God. Israel shall indeed receive the just, judicial, wrath of God as punishment for their sins. Remember, this is all happening in the presence of all Israel. Therefore, again all Israel are seeing the presence of God and hearing his voice of warning unto them. They cannot have excuse or reason for disobedience as they are here once again reminded to obey God's commandments.

"so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" We do see some hope here. We notice God says of the reprobates; they will understand that they have sinned against God, and that they are suffering justly under his judicial wrath. Just to be able to recognize they have forsaken God, and he has hidden his face from them, is a blessing that demonstrates that God is yet showering mercy upon them. Now is the time to be repentant and turn back to God.

19 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. **20** For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore 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. **21** 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 swore. **22** Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

Did you notice; Israel will turn away from God to idolatry when they are waxed fat, and are fully satisfied with the abundant blessings of God? This is a warning to us today; when everything is going just right for us; we must be more aware that our blessings come from God, and not forsake our Christ and turn from God to idols.

Moses did as God commanded and wrote the song of God and taught Israel to sing it. Notice that it must be sung often because God says, "**for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed.**" it shall not be forgotten by the following generations. The song doesn't end until Chapter 32 verse 47.

Now I ask you this question; what kind of songs do you sing? Are they songs that glorify God? Are they songs that bring you to remembrance of God's commandments and will? Are they songs that remind you of the great deliverances in your life by God and Christ?

I ask you these questions to provoke your minds to think of what you do when you sing other kinds of songs. The world sings of their own triumphs and how they fulfill the lust of their flesh, the lust of their eyes, and the pride of their lives. This is a manifestation of what we read about in: **1Jo 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."** If you sing those kinds of songs, you are, in effect, rejecting God and his leadership.

Almost every song I ever hear on radio, or other media, are filled with lyrics of people drinking to a state of drunkenness, doing drugs of various kinds, cheating, lying, stealing, and all other ungodly immortalities. These songs have become the standard of making people feel like "this is the way it is supposed to be." For an example, here are the lyrics to a song that people in the world sing with great pride today:

Livin' easy, Lovin' free, Season ticket on a one way ride, Askin' nothin', Leave me be, Takin' everythin' in my stride, Don't need reason, Don't need rhyme, Ain't nothin' that I'd rather do, Goin' down, Party time, My friends are gonna be there too.

I'm on the highway to hell, On the highway to hell, Highway to hell, I'm on the highway to hell.

No stop signs, Speed limit, Nobody's gonna slow me down, Like a wheel, Gonna spin it, Nobody's gonna mess me around, Hey satan, Payin' my dues, Playin' in a rockin' band, Hey mumma, Look at me I'm on the way to the promised land.

I'm on the highway to hell, Highway to hell, I'm on the highway to hell, Highway to hell, Don't stop me.

I'm on the highway to hell, On the highway to hell, Highway to hell, I'm on the highway to hell, (Highway to hell) I'm on the highway to hell, (Highway to hell) highway to hell, (Highway to hell) highway to hell, (Highway to hell) And I'm goin' down, All the way, I'm on the highway to hell.

Think about the defiance to God in this song. Obviously, they know there is a God because they recognize the promised land of which they have been taught. They also recognize satan and show their reverence to him by the very lyrics they are singing.

I remember a time when such songs were a delight to me, although many times God still afflicted my conscience when I would sing of the garbage of the world. Praise the Lord; the time of restoration came to me, and I no longer enjoy even listening to such trash. Now, by God's grace and mercy, I desire

the old hymns and songs, which inspire the heart and mind to a sweet consolation and communion with Christ.

This is why God inspired many writers through the years to write songs that bring us to remembrance that we are sinners; that we need God; that we need Christ; that we need salvation by grace; and the many other things that appertain to our God. An example, of one hymn that most all the world knows, and sings, is found in the Lloyd Hymnal, hymn number 3 in the Common Meter, titled: Salvation by Grace Alone.

- 1 *AMAZING grace! How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.*
- 2 *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed!*
- 3 *Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.*
- 4 *The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.*
- 5 *Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, And mortal life shall cease, I shall possess, within the veil, A life of joy and peace.*
- 6 *The world shall soon to ruin go, The sun forbear to shine; But God, who called me here below, Shall be forever mine.*

In these lyrics, we find that man is instructed in salvation by grace, and the desire to spend an eternity in heaven, not in hell as shown above in the worldly and satanic song. This may be one of the reasons that we are instructed in scripture to: **Jer 6:16 "Thus saith the LORD, *Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*"**

Here is another hymn that teaches us about trusting in God: Hymn 342 in the Lloyd Hymnal, Short Meter, titled: *God, all in all.*

- 1 *MY God, my life, my love, To thee, to thee I call; I cannot live if thou remove, For thou art all in all.*
- 2 *The smilings of thy face, How amiable they are! 'Tis heaven to rest in thine embrace, And nowhere else but there.*
- 3 *Not all the harps above Can make a heavenly place, If God his residence remove, Or but conceal his face.*
- 4 *Nor earth, nor all the sky Can one delight afford; No, not a drop of real joy Without thy presence, Lord.*
- 5 *Thou art the sea of love, Where all my pleasures roll; The circle where my passions move, And center of my soul.*
- 6 *To thee my spirits fly, With infinite desire; And yet how far from thee I lie! Dear Jesus, raise me higher.*

Secondarily, we notice; God commanded Moses to teach the entire nation of Israel (every man, woman, child, and stranger) this song. This tells me; all of God's people should sing together as a congregation, whereby, we may be brought to remembrance of the great things God has done for us. As we see more and more congregations getting away from hymn singing and turning to being entertained by a select group; we see the loss of the whole church body worshipping God in song. This helps us understand; why God commanded Moses to teach all Israel this song.

Think about this: When you sing the worldly songs, they stir up the flesh nature of your hearts, minds, and bodies. They cause your inherit nature to rise up in the lust of the flesh; drawing you away from God and godliness. With the mixture of the undulating tempos and ungodly lyrics, the flesh is stirred up to think and do that which is ungodly.

On the other hand: When you sing hymns that glorify and bring you to remembrance of God: when you sing hymns that cause you to see that you are a sinner, you are brought to remembrance of the salvation that Christ has wrought for you. Your flesh is not stirred up to ungodliness, but rather your hearts and minds are purged of worldliness, and you get a feeling within that is so refreshing, it is as if you have been washed clean of all your sins. The feeling, that your hearts and minds have been purged from ungodliness and brought to remembrance, of the greatness of the salvation of Christ given to you. Praise the Lord! for this wondrous work of the Holy Spirit in us when we sing praise to God and Christ.

23 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 swore unto them: and I will be with thee.

God gives Joshua a charge and encourages Joshua "***Be strong and of a good courage***", because "***I will be with you.***" This is all we see in this chapter about Joshua's charge.

We have a similar charge given to us; when we are born-again, seen in: ***Heb 13:5-6; 5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."*** God likewise encourages us to trust fully in his divine power.

24 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, 25 That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 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. 27 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?

Moses is speaking to the Levites here. Why would he address the Levites first? Because they are the ones who are to teach the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances, of God. Moses reminds them, your tribe was first in disobeying God when we came out of Egypt and Aaron made the golden calf to satisfy the people, which led them to forget God completely. You were first in disobeying God in the sin of Korah.

Moses tells them that you did these things in my lifetime, and I don't expect that you will do any better when I die. This testimony of God is a witness against you. It is to remind you to be faithful in your service to me, and to my people Israel, for whom you have been set apart to minister unto.

28 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. 29 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. 30 And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

We see that Moses, by experience, knows the heart of Israel, and their lack of faith in God, which will lead to their demise and destruction. Moses tells Israel, as he did the Levites, I have seen your aptitude to turn away from God manifested many times. I know that you will continue to turn from God. This song, that I am teaching you, is to be a testimony against you when you forget God and turn away.

We notice; Moses taught all Israel (man, woman, child, and stranger) the words of the song. Therefore, we need to be teaching of God's people (man, woman, child, and stranger) to sing the hymns of God and not the songs of the world. The songs of the world, and of the devil, will lead us lead us away from God. They will not direct our thoughts to God.

We all need to be singing songs that teach us the greatness and power of God, the desire to go to heaven and immortal glory, the dangers of the world of sin, the depths and depravity of sin and hell. Hymns of grace will lead us to Christ. They will not lead us away from God. This is a great blessing from God to usward. As the psalmist says in: ***Ps 95:1 "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."***

I can personally testify; it was singing those old hymns, which drew me to love the Lord and the Lord's people. I have heard many others testify; that singing hymns was what first drew them to love God and his people. I believe; God uses hymns which He inspired to be written, and tunes that He inspired to be written, and matched to the hymn lyrics, together, with the harmonies and melodies of voices blended together, to awaken hearts and minds to the wonders of an Almighty God, and the need for a Saviour. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Sing on!