



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

**SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL**  
**SERMONS ON VARIOUS TOPICS**

To Remember All the Way in Which the  
Lord hath Led the Believer, Both in  
Providence and Grace, a Duty  
Incumbent on Him

**DEUTERONOMY 8:2**

*by John Gill*

*(London: Wm. Hardcastle, 1814)*

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth*

— Psalm 60:4

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# SERMON 96

## TO REMEMBER ALL THE WAY IN WHICH THE LORD HATH LED THE BELIEVER, BOTH IN PROVIDENCE AND GRACE, A DUTY INCUMBENT ON HIM

### DEUTERONOMY 8:2

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart; whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. ~~END~~

*This chapter begins with an exhortation to keep the commandments of the Lord, even all his commandments;* and to this end, that such might live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of Canaan, which the Lord swore unto their fathers. All the commandments of God are to be kept; one, as well as another; whether those of the first, or second table of the law; whether such that respect God or man; whether greater or lesser, all are to be kept. The law requires perfect obedience; and, in case of failure, it curses and condemns. Its language is, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.”

*A good man, from a principle of grace, is desirous of having respect unto all God’s commandments, to do them, in faith, and from a principle of love, and with a view to his glory;* without trusting in, or depending upon, obedience to that law, for justification before God. He esteems all his precepts, concerning all things, to be right; and hates every false way. Really good men are enabled, in some measure (though not in an absolute, yet in a comparative sense), to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, as Zechariah and Elizabeth did (~~END~~ Luke 1:6).

*Such is the exhortation in the beginning of the chapter, which is repeated in verse eleven,* “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in

not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day.” ***Wherefore the people of Israel were directed to bind them upon their hands, and place them as frontlets between their eyes. Not in a literal sense; but by such expressions they were taught to have these laws and precepts continually in their view***, as persons have any thing that is bound upon their hands, or between their eyes; that so they might always have respect to them, and walk according to those rules given. ***The end of which was, that they might live, multiply, and go in and possess the land which God swore unto their fathers***; that is (as this respects the Israelites), that they might live comfortably and safely in the land of Canaan; a land flowing with milk and honey. Possess it with all the benefits and blessings of it; for they held the tenure of that land by their obedience to the commandments of God (<sup>2019</sup> Isaiah 1:19). ***Spiritual and eternal life were not to be had in this way, or by obedience to these commandments: no, not spiritual life, for if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law***. But the law cannot give life, spiritual life, to a dead sinner; and if so, then not eternal life, which is the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and not the merit of men’s works.

***What Moses, under divine direction, exhorts the people of Israel to, in the words of the text, is, to remember all the way in which they had been led in the wilderness***. They had been forty years, or thereabouts, travelling therein; and they had there received many mercies from the Lord, had a large and long experience of his goodness, in all his ways towards them; and now they are called upon to remember all that was done to humble them, to prove them, to make known what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep his commandments, or no.

***In this direction we may observe the following,***

- I.** The place wherein these people were led. The time when, and how long they were led in the wilderness; even for forty years.
- II.** The way, all the way that they were led by the Lord, in the wilderness; for though a trackless wilderness, yet there was a way which God made for them in it, and led them in this way.

**III.** The duty which is represented as incumbent upon them; and that is, to remember all the way in which the Lord had led them, these forty years in the wilderness. And lastly,

**IV.** The end that was to be answered by the Lord's leading them in this way; which was to humble them, to prove them, to know what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep his commandments, or no.

***I. The place wherein they were led, and the time in which they were led in this wilderness; Thou shalt remember all the way in which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.*** As soon as the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, they came into a wilderness: when they had passed through the Red Sea, they came into the *wilderness of Shur* (<sup>(0152)</sup>Exodus 15:22). There they traveled for three days to find water: after that, we hear of their coming to the *wilderness of Sin* (<sup>(0261)</sup>Exodus 16:1): and from thence to the *wilderness of Sinai* (<sup>(0291)</sup>Exodus 19:1), where the law was given them, and where they took instructions for the tabernacle, and made all things pertaining thereunto. They staid there for some time; and from thence they went to the *wilderness of Paran* (<sup>(0412)</sup>Numbers 10:12): and so they went from one wilderness to another and indeed were always in a wilderness from first to last. From Paran they sent forth spies into the good land, (for they were then very near it); but these spies, in general, bringing a bad report of the land, the people murmured against God and his servant; which was so highly resented, that the Lord gave orders that they should return and go into the *wilderness by the Red Sea* again. As it was threatened them, so it was, that they wandered about in the wilderness forty years; that is, thirty-eight years more, making up in all that period.

At this time they were in the plains of Moab, and the forty years were almost up. They were in the fortieth year of their travels, when these words were expressed by Moses, which we are about to improve.

*Now the wilderness which they had been led in, for forty years past, may be considered either as an emblem of an unregenerate state, or of this world.* Of an unregenerate state (in which the Lord's people are, by nature, as well as others; and out of which they have been brought by grace). This is like a wilderness, which is uncultivated: there is nothing sown or planted in it; there is nothing but the mere produce of nature; so in an unregenerate man's heart,

there is no seed of grace, no engrafted word, no fruits of righteousness. In a wilderness there is a want of provisions; so a man that is in a state of nature, has no spiritual provisions, no heavenly food, no divine refreshments; there is no bread of life here, only husks which swine do eat; therefore, souls which are in such a state, are in a starving and famishing condition; hence it is called, *a pit wherein is no water*. In a wilderness there are many by-paths, and perplexing ones; which may express the bewildered state men are in by nature, not knowing where they are, or whither they are going. In short, the wilderness is expressive of a state very uncomfortable and forlorn, hopeless and comfortless; which is the state of the unregenerate. Now in this state and condition God finds his people, when he calls them by his grace, as he did Israel of old; of whom it is said, *He found them in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness*: but he does not leave his people here, he brings them out of it; which is an instance of his distinguishing and surprising grace.

But perhaps the wilderness may rather be considered as an emblem of this world, where the Lord finds his people, and calls them forth from the men of it; and yet, nevertheless, they are *in* the world, though they are not *of* the world. Though called by grace, they are in a wilderness: this is the argument Christ makes use of with his Divine Father to keep them; “I have given them thy word, and the world hateth them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world; but that thou wouldst keep them from the evil.” (<sup><B174</sup>John 17:14, 15) Though they are called powerfully by the grace of God, out of this natural state, and from the men of the world, they are in this wilderness, and they are led about in it: they are led by the Lord in various ways, until he brings them, at length, safe unto his everlasting kingdom and glory.

This world is like a wilderness. The land of Egypt is called the wilderness of Egypt, and the wilderness of the people: so the whole world may be called, where are, for the most part, beasts of prey, wicked men, comparable thereunto. Those beasts, which the apostle Paul fought with at Ephesus. What is in the world but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? These are what natural men feed upon; but these are not food for the saints. There are many by-paths in this wilderness; and in it the Lord’s people are led, are instructed and kept as the apple of his eye.

**II. I come to consider the way, all the way, the Lord leads his people, his spiritual people, in this wilderness.** The way that he leads them in may be considered,

1. More generally.
2. More specially.

**First.** *More generally.* It may be called a way that is unknown; that is unbeaten, and trackless. The way in the wilderness, in which the people of Israel were led, was unknown to them; it was trackless and unbeaten, which, perhaps none had ever gone before; however, *they* had not, therefore the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. In a pillar of cloud by day, not only to direct their journey, which way they should take, but to shelter them from the scorching heat of the sun; and in the night, in a pillar of fire, to guide and direct them in the way.

1. It was sometimes proper, and most convenient to travel in the night, in those sultry regions. Now, as the way in which the Lord led the people of Israel in the wilderness, was an *unknown, trackless way* to them; so is the way the Lord leads his people in this world, to them, till they are led in it. I will, says Jehovah, bring the blind by *a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths which they have not known; I will make darkness light before them* (alluding, perhaps, to the pillar of *fire*, by which he directed the Israelites), *and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them* (<sup>2366</sup> Isaiah 43:16). And they, being led in this way, have but few to accompany them. It is an unbeaten road. The way, the road to destruction, is a broad road, and there are many that state, are in a starving and famishing condition; hence it is called, a *pit wherein is no water*. In a wilderness there are many by-paths, and perplexing ones; which may express the bewildered state men are in by nature, not knowing where they are, or whither they are going. In short, the wilderness is expressive of a state very uncomfortable and forlorn, hopeless and comfortless; which is the state of the unregenerate. Now in this state and condition God finds his people, when he calls them by his grace, as he did Israel of old; of whom it is said, *he found them in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness*: but he does not leave his people here, he brings them out of it; which is an instance of his distinguishing and surprising grace.

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This world is like a wilderness. The land of Egypt is called the wilderness of Egypt, and the wilderness of the people: so the whole world may be called, where are, for the most part, beasts of prey, wicked men, comparable thereunto. Those beasts, which the apostle Paul fought with at Ephesus. What is in the world but the lust of the walk in it. The whole world lies in wickedness, under the power of sin, and under the influence of that wicked one, Satan: but there are few travelers in the way in which the Lord leads his people; it is altogether an unknown way to the men of the world. This is a *path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden in it, nor the fierce lion passed by it*, as in <sup><B301></sup>Job 28:7, 8. What is there said by him, perhaps may have a literal meaning; yet, in a figurative and spiritual sense, is true of this path and way I am speaking of. Almost the same thing is said of this way of holiness the people of God are led in.

And an high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those, the way-faring men, though fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there (<sup><B301></sup>Isaiah 35:8, 9).

This is a path which, as wicked men are unacquainted with, so they do not choose to walk in it. So far as they have any notion of it, it is quite disagreeable to them: and if any of them do take a step or two in this way, in an external manner, by taking upon them a profession of religion, they are soon tired and

wearied of it. They meet with rugged paths that are not grateful to them. If tribulation arise because of the word, presently they are offended and gone. The things of this world, profits and pleasures, draw them off from an external walk in these ways. The apostle says of Demas, that he forsook him, having loved this present world. It is a path, unknown to natural men, and altogether disagreeable to them: yet it is a way which is plain, easy and delightful to the Lord's people. David put up this petition to God;

Lead me in a plain path (<sup>~4271~</sup>Psalm 27:11).

Indeed, the ways of the Lord are right, plain and easy; and the just walk therein comfortably, and pleasantly; but the wicked stumble and fall therein. Yea, it is such a plain way (though so little used, and unknown to them before they are led in it,) that even fools shall not err therein (<sup>~23816~</sup>Isaiah 35:8).

2. It is *a way in which they should go*.

I am the Lord thy God which leadeth thee, by the way that thou shouldest go (<sup>~23817~</sup>Isaiah 58:17).

Man, originally, when he came out of his Maker's hands, was put in a right way, and he walked in that way for a while, during his state of innocence, and then he forsook it. He went out of this way, and all his posterity have followed him. It is said *they are all gone out of the way* (<sup>~41812~</sup>Romans 3:12). They have left the way of uprightness, purity and holiness, to walk in the ways of darkness: and their ways are crooked and froward. There is no judgment in their goings. They go by no rule, and they have made their ways crooked; not at all agreeable and conformable to the rule of God's word. Every man turns to his own way (<sup>~23816~</sup>Isaiah 53:6): and a very dangerous one it is; for though there is a way which seemeth good to a man, pleasing to his carnal heart, yet the end thereof is death. The broad road leadeth to destruction: yea, destruction and misery are in all the ways of sinful men.

Now the Lord, by his Spirit and grace, convinces his own people of the evil of their ways, in which they have walked in an unregenerate state, and turns them from these evil ways, directs them to walk in the right way; and when they attempt to turn to the right hand or to the left, they hear, as it were, a voice behind them, saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it*. This way they find to be pleasant and profitable. *Pleasant*: Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness,



and all her paths are paths of peace. *Profitable*: for godliness, or the way of godliness, hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.

It is a *right* way in which the Lord leads his people. It is such as they should walk in, though it is often a *rough* way; because of the ill usage they meet with from the men of the world, the violence of Satan's temptations, the divine desertions, and the various afflictions which attend them for through many tribulations, from different quarters, the children of God enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yet, after all, it is a right way: it is the way in which they should go; and it is their heavenly Father's pleasure they should walk in it.

**3.** This way is called *the way of holiness*, in that before-mentioned text (<sup>(238)</sup>Isaiah 35:8). Men are naturally walking in different paths; in the ways of impurity and unholiness: even God's people, in a state of unregeneracy, walk in these ways. They walk after the course of this world, and according to the influence of the prince of the power of the air; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; gratifying their senses; and giving up themselves to work wickedness, "The time past of your lives (says the apostle, speaking to converted persons) may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles" (<sup>(40)</sup>1 Peter 4:3): suggesting, that in the former part of their lives they walked as the Gentiles did, in all manner of sin and wickedness.

Now the Lord, by his Spirit, convinces his people in due tune, of the evil of their ways: of the evil nature of them, and of the evil tendency of them, and gives them repentance unto life that needeth not to be repented of: turns them from the evil of their ways, and leads them in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The gospel of the grace of God appears to them, comes with power and influence upon them, teaching them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Once more,

**4.** The way in which the people of God are led in this wilderness is, *the way of truth*: for though they have been misled heretofore, and carried away with the error of the wicked, yet now the Spirit of the Lord leads them into all truth as it is in Jesus. Hence we read of persons walking in the truth. John rejoiced that he saw his children walk in the truth. Truth is set before the Lord's people in a most amiable manner, and they choose to walk in this way, and abide therein. They have their conversation more or less agreeable to the truth of the gospel of

the grace of God. They abide by the truth, and make that the rule of their conversation. But in the

**Second.** *More particularly.* The way in which the Lord leads his people in this wilderness, is Christ. He is *the way*. He is THE WAY, by way of eminence. The way, the truth, and the life. They are led *to* him as the way, and they are led *in* him as the way. They are led,

**1.** *To him as the way, as the only way of salvation.* They are, through the power of divine grace, brought to see their undone state and condition by nature. They are shewn the evil of their way, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; what it deserves at the hands of God, even eternal damnation. They are shewn, that they are unable to make satisfaction for the sins they have committed, and that they cannot save themselves from wrath to come. The law works wrath in their consciences, and there is in them a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. They are cut to the heart, and cry out, what must we do? what will become of us? We are wretched, miserable creatures, obnoxious to the wrath of God, the curses of his righteous law, and everlasting damnation. What must we do to be saved?

Now these persons, awakened and convinced by the Spirit of God, are led to Christ for salvation. Not only in a doctrinal way, or through the ministration of the gospel, are they shewn the way of salvation by Christ. (For Christ's faithful servants, are the servants of the most high God, who shew unto men the way of salvation: and happy it is for souls in such circumstances I have described, if they are cast, by divine providence, under a gospel ministry that will direct them in the way of salvation, Christ Jesus.) But this is not all; for not only are the Lord's people shewn, in a ministerial way, the way of salvation by Christ; but the Spirit of Christ takes of the things of Christ and shews them to them; takes the salvation of Christ, which he has wrought out, and sets it before them in a proper light. He shows them how suitable to their case and circumstances it is; how free, and how full: and what an able and willing Saviour Christ is. Now a poor sensible sinner, finding there is hope concerning the salvation of his soul by Jesus Christ, and being exhorted and encouraged to hope, because in him there is plenteous redemption, a fulness of salvation, that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, he goes, and looks to him, as he himself bids him;

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else (<sup>3452</sup>Isaiah 45:22).

He goes and says, as the disciples in a distressing *case*, *Lord save us or we perish*. Finding salvation in him, he renounces all other foundations of hope, and resolves, in the strength of divine grace, that he, and he alone, shall be his salvation. Thus the Lord's people are led to Christ as the way of salvation.

More particularly; *They are led unto his righteousness as the way of their justification before God*. They may have trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, as even the apostle did, who thought himself, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless: so the whole nation of Israel went about to establish their own righteousness, and submitted not to the righteousness of God. And frequently so it is when the Lord's people are first awakened to see their bewildered state and condition by nature. They are for doing something to avert divine wrath, to appease an angry God, to obtain his favour, and acceptance with him. They think by some works of righteousness of their own to do this. The Spirit of God convinces them of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, shews them the impurity and imperfection of it; shews them that it will stand in no more stead, than Adam's fig-leaves would protect him from the eye of God, and his justice. Their own works are a covering too narrow to wrap themselves in, and a bed too short to stretch themselves upon: they will be of no avail in their justification before God: and not only so, but the Spirit of God takes the righteousness of Christ, and sets *that* before the eyes of these persons. *Hearken to me ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness*: a character which not only agrees with carnal men, but with God's people at their first awakenings. They are, at first, stout-hearted, and are far from true righteousness, the righteousness of Christ; they do not care to submit to it. *Hearken unto me, behold I bring near my salvation, and my righteousness shall not tarry*. Now this is not only revealed in a doctrinal, but also an experimental way, from faith to faith from a small to a greater degree of faith. Faith is wrought in the soul, to look unto, and receive this righteousness, as the alone justifying one: and the soul is enabled to say, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*; and desires to be found therein, living and dying.

They are led also, under a sense of their impurity, to *the blood of Christ*. They may, and do, in their natural state, fancy themselves pure: and they may, upon what sense they have of the impurity of their nature, think of some ways and

means to cleanse themselves; but the Spirit of God not only sets before them the wretched impurity of their nature, the plague of their own heart, what a sink of impurity it is, but shews them the insufficiency of every thing of their own to help them; their repentance, their tears, and the like. Therefore they, as it were, put *a covering upon their upper lip, and cry, unclean, unclean*. They are like the poor leper in the gospel, who said, *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*. They flee to that fountain, the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin. They are led (and the Lord leads all his people) to the fulness of grace in Christ for a supply. They, in their natural state, may think they are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing; but when they come to be convinced by the Spirit of God, they find they want every thing; and that their wants are only to be supplied by Christ: to him they come, and find supply, and with joy draw water out of these wells of salvation, or receive out of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace.

**2.** *They are not only led to Christ, as the way of salvation and righteousness, but they are led in him as the way; and to walk on in him, as they have received him:* to live by faith upon the Son of God. Christ is the way; he is the way to the Father,

No man (says he) cometh to the Father, but by me (<sup>4146</sup>John 14:6).

Now the Lord's people make use of him as the new and living way to the Father: by whom they have access, with some degree of boldness, when faith is in exercise. They make use of him as the way to the throne of grace, considering him as an high priest over the house of God, and as their advocate with the Father; they come with an holy boldness, and ask for grace and mercy; not in their own names, but in the name of Christ, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only.

They consider him as the way to the covenant of grace, and to the enjoyment of all the blessings of that covenant. He is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of it: his blood is the blood of the everlasting covenant, by which it is confirmed. All the blessings of it come to them that way; and all the promises of it are yea, and amen, in him.

He is the way to eternal happiness. There is no enjoying the kingdom of heaven, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, No man can be possessed of that heavenly state without a righteousness. Except a man's righteousness

exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Christ imparts grace in regeneration, and his righteousness is imputed for their justification; so they have both a meetness and a right, through him, to eternal glory. He is the way they are led into. There are other lesser ways God's people are led in; namely, the ordinances of Christ. These are ways the Lord leads his people in, which he makes to be the ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace unto them, and they delight to walk in them: they say, *come, let us go up to the house of the Lord, he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.*

**3.** *But now let it be observed further, that this passage respects not only the way in which the children of Israel were led in the wilderness, but all the occurrences of the way; all they met with in the way, and which they were to remember. So there are various things that the people of God meet with in their way, and which are worthy of their notice, and should be remembered by them. "Remember all the way," or all thou meetest with in the way. Israel met with many things in the way, for the trial of their faith and obedience; and so they met with many things for their encouragement, their relief, deserving of their remembrance: so do the spiritual Israel of God find many things worthy of their notice and remembrance in this wilderness.*

"Thou shalt remember *all* the way." O believers! you that are effectually called by the grace of God, turned out of the wrong way, the evil ways in which you were; remember, remember how the Lord met with you in your career of sin: remember what a condition you were in, when you were called by the grace of God; what schemes you were forming, and methods you were devising for the gratifying your lusts. That it was in the height of your sin and rebellion against God, that he met you, and led you in the right way; as the three thousand who were converted under Peter's sermon, that had imbrued their hands in the blood of Jesus, and at that very time were come to mock at the disciples, and charged them with intemperance, because of the gifts of the Spirit poured down upon them. In this condition they were, when the Lord met with them, convinced, and converted them: and as Saul, afterwards the great apostle of the Gentiles, when he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the saints: when he had letters from the high priest to take up those at Damascus, that were followers of Jesus. In the midst of all this, the Lord met him, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Now something like this may have been your case; and God met with you when you were in the height of sin, when you were forming to yourselves schemes how to go on in a course of iniquity. Remember this: remember. how the Lord brought you to Christ, as poor perishing sinners; as the chief of sinners, which you then saw yourselves to be; what encouragement you had to come unto him, and venture your soul upon him; how you were encouraged by such kind declarations as these, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*

Remember what exceeding great and precious promises have been made to you in the way; what discoveries of the love of God were made to your souls very early; such as those, when the Lord appeared to you, and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." What applications of pardoning grace and mercy were made to your souls, in a view of all your iniquities, with all their aggravated circumstances; when a declaration was made like this, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression, for my own name's sake; and will not remember thy sins.* When you have been in the view of enemies, and of danger from them, attended with fears of falling away, of coming short of heaven and happiness at last (things not being right with you), and Jehovah has graciously appeared, and said, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* Remember, soon after the Lord commanded light to shine out of darkness, what joy, peace, and comfort he afforded you, such as Job speaks of, and wishes it might be again, as it had been;

O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness (~~Job~~ Job 29:2, 3).

Remember what communion with God, what fellowship with the blessed Jesus, you were indulged with, when you could, in an exulting manner, say, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

Remember what spiritual pleasure you had in the worship and ordinances of the Most High; when you (like the children of Israel, who were led to Elim, where were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees) found the

ordinances to be like those wells of water. Jehovah hath caused you to lie down beside the still waters, and led you into green pastures, where you have met with refreshings from the presence of the Lord: remember how you at times have sat down under the shadow of Jesus with great delight, and his fruit has been sweet unto your taste: and when, like the apostles, you could have wished to have had tabernacles built and to have remained there: remember the food you have been fed with all the way in which you have been led in the wilderness. As the children of Israel were fed with the corn of heaven, with angels food, so you have been fed with the heavenly manna, the bread of life, and the water of life; nourished up with the words of faith and sound doctrine: how often have you found the word and eat it; and it has been the joy and rejoicing of your heart.

Remember the temptations you have met with in the way, and how you have been delivered out of them: how many have been the temptations you have been beset with to apostatize from God, forsake his good ways, call in question all that God has done for you; to murmur against God and his providence, and even to deny the Most high, with many other things of this kind. Remember also, how the Lord has been with you, and supported you under these temptations; how the blessed Jesus hath succored you; how, when the enemy hath come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord has lifted up a standard against him: how have you found the grace of God sufficient for you, and the Lord hath upheld you under the temptation, and at last delivered you from it.

Remember the afflictions you have met with in the way, and how you have been brought out of them; as the children of Israel when they came to drink of the waters of Marah, and found them bitter, had a tree cast in, and they became sweet to them. The Lord has been with you, when passing, as it were, through the fire: remember how he has carried you through, and made all things work together for good; been with you in six and seven troubles, and delivered you out of them; and here you are at this day. Remember how the Lord has led you, some ten, some twenty, some thirty, some forty years, as in the text. ***I now proceed,***

***III. To the duty enjoined, which is, to remember all the way in which the Lord leads his people.***

*In some respects we are to forget the things which are behind, pressing towards the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus; that is, we are so to forget former things, as not to rest, or to be contented, without seeking further increase of grace, and an enlargement of experience. This, however, is quite consistent with its being our duty to remember what God has done for us, and all the way in which he hath led us; in order to express before him our gratitude and thankfulness. Though the blessings bestowed upon us are more than we can number; yet in the best manner we can, we are to reckon them up, and lay them before him: we are so to remember them as to call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless his holy name; so as not to be charged with forgetting the Rock of our salvation. We are to remember these things so as to declare them to others, to the glory of God's grace: we are to act the part the Psalmist did, who says, *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* How he met with me, how he called me by his grace, how he led me on, and brought me hitherto; and what experience he hath given me of his divine favour. Thus we should remember and declare these things for the benefit of others.*

We are to remember these things for our own instruction and advantage, while we are yet in the wilderness. The Psalmist says,

*My soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizah*  
(<sup>906</sup>Psalm 42:6):

a meaning, that he would remember those places and times where, and when, the Lord had graciously appeared to him, and indulged him with some comfortable visits, and some enlarged experience of his grace. Now these he called to mind, to encourage his faith and hope under present discouragements and perplexities. It is good to do so, and with this view gracious souls may reason, as Manoah's wife did, "*If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have shewed us all these things.*" So may you say, "If the Lord had had a mind to have destroyed me, he would never have led me all the way in the wilderness, as he hath done." The soul may reasonably argue from grace to glory; "If God hath called me by his grace, if I am justified and sanctified, I shall be glorified."



Last of all, believers should remember all the way they have been led to quicken them to obedience; which seems to be the sense here. And indeed there is nothing more quickening than a calling to remembrance what he hath done for us. The love of God and of Christ, has a constraining power to engage souls to a ready and cheerful obedience to the commands of God. Good old Jacob, when he reflected upon his journey from Padanaram to the land of Canaan, said to his family, *Let us arise and go to Bethel (to offer sacrifice), and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.* I remember his presence with me, how graciously he dealt with me; come now, arise, and let us go Bethel, etc. Thus a recollection of the way the Lord hath led us, has a tendency to quicken to obedience. ***I proceed to consider,***

***IV. The end of the Lord's leading his people in this way; and that was to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep his commandments, or no.***

*To humble them.* This is the design of all God's ways in providence with his people, that they, being clothed with humility, might be exalted in due time. This was God's end in dealing with Job, and it was fully answered: so this is the end and design of God, in mercy to his people, that the pride of man may be brought down, and the haughtiness of man may be laid low, and God be exalted in their salvation. *It was to prove them also,* as God proved and tried Abraham: though it was in a very severe way, by requiring him to offer up his only and beloved. He complies: by this the Lord proved his faith, and love, and fear too. The Lord leads his people all the way in the wilderness to prove their graces: their faith, which is more precious than gold tried in the fire: their patience, their hope, and every other grace. *Also to know what is in their hearts.* As Hezekiah was left of God, to know what was in his heart, in the case of the messengers from Babylon; so the Lord leads his people in the way he does, to know what is in their hearts. Not that he hereby gains knowledge; for he is the searcher of the hearts, and trier of the reins of the children of men; but to make known to themselves, how great is the plague of their own hearts. *Also to see whether they will keep his commandments, or no.* Israel had at Sinai declared very strongly that all the Lord had said, they would do. "They have well said," says the Lord. "Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments!" Now he leads them

about in the wilderness, and that for forty years together, to try this, to prove this, to let it be seen whether they would keep the commandments of the Lord as they promised to do.

***But I shall conclude with a word or two.*** Upon the whole, let us inquire whether we have been led by the Lord, and in what way. Has the Lord met with us in the way of our transgressions, and hath he turned us out of the way in which we were, and led us in the right path, the way of salvation? let us inquire whether we have been led by the Lord in his way. As many as are led by him, led in that way which the natural man knows nothing of; as many as are led in the way of holiness and truth (and particularly in the way Christ Jesus, led unto him, and led in him) are the sons of God. Let us inquire whether this be our case, or no. *If we are led by the Spirit of God, we may conclude, that we are the sons of God;* and if this be the case, what reason have we to admire the grace of God in leading us in this way! He might have left us in our sins, in the wilderness in which we were; yet he has not done so, but hath led us in the right way to a city of habitation. How should this engage to a cheerful obedience to him, as well as to put our confidence in him! for he that hath led us, some ten, some twenty, some thirty and some forty years, and perhaps some more, in the wilderness, will be our God for ever and ever, and our guide even unto death.