

The Song of Moses: Deuteronomy 32
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The Fellowship of Ailbe
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Introduction to Deuteronomy 32

God knew that His people did not yet have a heart for Him. So He sought to soften their hearts and to keep them somewhat attuned to Him by giving Moses a song to teach the people of God. The Song of Moses celebrated the greatness and grace of God. It warned His people about drifting from Him and turning to false gods. It set forth terrible threats for disobedience. But it also showed God to be forgiving and faithful to His covenant.

God was adamant that the people should sing this song and teach it to their children and all the generations to come. There is no indication in Scripture that Israel did this. The Song of Moses is still sung in heaven, however, so perhaps God will be pleased for us revive and use it in our day.

Susie and I hope you will find this study challenging and enriching for your walk with and work for the Lord.

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T. M. and Susie Moore

1 The Greatness of God

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.3, 4

For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.3, 4

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

He is the Rock, His work is sure, and justice defines His every Word:
A God of truth, upright and pure, both just and righteous is our Lord!
Perfect is He in all His ways, without injustice, deserving praise!

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 31.30-32.4

Preparation

1. What is the focus of these verses?
2. Why do you think God had Moses' song begin this way?

Meditation

Moses "spoke" the words of his song to the people of Israel, assembled before him (31.30). But if he merely "spoke" them, what makes this a song? It does not seem as if God gave Moses any particular melody to use in singing this song, as important as the song is. That means every generation would be free to set this song to any melody they found useful in learning and singing it. That includes our generation.

This is a song because it is given in poetic form, where ideas rhyme and develop, images abound, and metaphors carry significant meaning. The song begins with the greatness of God. Moses calls heaven and earth to hear his testimony and his teaching (vv. 1, 2). Thus, this song begins as a witness to all creation about the Lord. The teaching about Him comes as refreshing rain or dew to renew and restore the earth. The greatness of God is the theme (v. 3), not only of this stanza, but of the entire song of Moses. That greatness will show up in various ways, but this is the message Israel was supposed to take away from this song.

God is unchanging, indestructible, perfect, just, righteous, and upright (v. 4). Israel must always remember this, especially as they begin to consider other gods and to drift into idolatry. In His greatness, God will not simply stand aside and let His people corrupt themselves. As the rest of the song will show, God moves to discipline His people when they turn His gifts into idols and their backs to His Word.

Our witness about our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, is neither harsh nor burdensome. It is like sweet rain falling or fresh dew on the grass. When the Gospel is such a song on our lips, people will listen.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

This is the Song for the Ages! Moses' song has superseded the popularity of all the greats through all the years. All previous Grammy Award winners need to step aside. Nothing has had the staying power that this song has had, whether classical, country, jazz, rock, folk, blues, gospel, soul, or any of the other myriad kinds

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of music that exist. Moses wrote it and taught it to the children of Israel. Skip hundreds of years, and we see John writing about it in Revelation: “And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.” The scene is set. Ready? “They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!’” (Rev. 15.2, 3). And then they continue with the rest of the verse. Singing of the greatness of God. From early in the history of mankind to the end of time as we know it, this song has and will be sung. It is a timeless classic that we would all do well to learn, sing, and remember.

Reflection

1. How did Moses regard the message he was about to give? Is this how we regard the Gospel?
2. What do we learn from these verses about the greatness of God?
3. How might you benefit from learning and singing this song?

He signifies by these words that, if there were any spark of piety in the Israelites, it must be manifested by their welcoming this address, wherein the majesty of God shines forth. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 32.3*

Great are You, Lord, and greatly to be praised! Let me take this song with me, to sing Your praises throughout the day as I...

Closing Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.1-4

Use these verses to praise God for His many glorious attributes. Linger over each phrase or term, and let your heart fill with the greatness of the Lord. Sing these verses over and over throughout the day.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.1-4

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

Give ear, O heav'ns, I will proclaim, and hear, O earth the words I tell:
Let now my teaching drop as rain, my speech as morning dew distill,
as show'rs that fall on thirsty grass, and rain on tender herbs at last:

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

He is the Rock, His work is sure, and justice defines His every Word:
A God of truth, upright and pure, both just and righteous is our Lord!
Perfect is He in all His ways, without injustice, deserving praise!

Refrain, v. 3

2 The Grace of God

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.9, 10

For the LORD's portion *is* His people;
Jacob *is* the place of His inheritance.
"He found him in a desert land
And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.9, 10, 3

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

God has His people made His own, the place of His inheritance –
found in the desert, all alone, and in the howling wilderness.
God came and taught them and drew them nigh, and kept them the apple of His eye.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 32.5-14

Preparation

1. How many ways is the grace of God evident in these verses?
2. Which aspects of Israel's history are recalled here?

Meditation

These verses begin to look ahead to what will be the primary theme of this song, the ingratitude, idolatry, and rebellion of God's people (v. 5). Before that, however, having sung of God's greatness, Moses now turns to recall the abundance of God's grace toward Israel.

God bought Israel out of captivity and established them as His people (v. 6), as any of their parents or elders could tell them, He separated them from all the other nations to be His people (vv. 7-10). In the wilderness He hovered over and protected them, and led His people in the way they should go, providing for them every step of the way (vv. 11-13). Looking ahead now, Moses sings of what God has promised He will do, bringing abundant blessings to the people in the land of promise (vv. 13, 14).

God has cared and provided for His people consistently, so that they wanted for nothing; yet they will corrupt themselves from His holy way (v. 5). This is no way to respond to the grace of God.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The grace of God abounds. Always. And in these verses of Moses' song, we see a loving and tender recurrence of doting love. A parental love found in nature that is given of necessity, not because it is deserved. One exemplified by a bird for its offspring: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him" (Deut. 32.11, 12). In Psalm 91 we find the same image: "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler" (v. 4). A dear friend once told me, "We should not love because of the worthiness of the target, but because of the love God generates in our hearts." Just love. That's how God loves us. Jesus proclaimed this same idea when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Lk. 13.34) We are loved by

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God. Not because we deserve it, but because He chooses to. We would do well to be willing to receive it, cherish it, and rejoice eternally to be the apple of His eye. That is grace.

Reflection

1. How many ways can you identify that God has extended His grace to you already today? Thank Him for each one.
2. How do you anticipate needing the grace of God to help you through this day? Ask Him for it now.
3. How will you be a channel of God's grace to others today? Prepare for each opportunity by asking God to generate the love in your heart.

Moses again shows how God had acquired this people, viz., because he had chosen to separate them from other nations according to His own good pleasure. But, since the Israelites might be inflated by their present superiority, they are reminded of their origin, and Moses commands them not to consider what they now are, but also from whence they had been taken, and with this view he says, Remember the old times; ask the elders, etc. John Calvin (1506-1564), Commentary on Deuteronomy 32.7

Thank You, Lord, for all the grace You show me each day, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.5-8, 11-14

In prayer, review all the ways God has reached you with His grace, using today's text as your guide.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.5-8, 11-14

(Sagina: [And Can It Be](#))

See how His children go astray, corrupt and blemished one and all;
wicked and crooked in every way, He will not them His children call.
Fools and unwise, His love to spurn, and from Your Creator and Father turn!

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Think now on all the days of old, the generations passed above,
how, by our fathers and elders told, we learned of God's redeeming love.
When He the nations set apart, He kept His people in His heart.

Refrain, v. 3

Just like an eagle guards its nest, and spreads its wings to shield its own,
takes them and shelters them in his breast, so God preserved them all alone.
No foreign god assistance brings: He carries them on His own wings.

Refrain, v. 3

He made His people lords of earth, to eat the produce of their fields,
lavished them all with creation's worth, and blessed their harvests and their yields.
He made their flocks and herds abound, and blessed the vintage of their ground.

Refrain, v. 3

3 Spurned

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.15-18

“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;
You grew fat, you grew thick,
You are obese!
Then he forsook God *who* made him,
And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign *gods*;
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
They sacrificed to demons, not to God,
To gods they did not know,
To new *gods*, new arrivals
That your fathers did not fear.
Of the Rock *who* begot you, you are unmindful,
And have forgotten the God who fathered you.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.15-18, 3

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

Then they forsook their gracious God, and scorned their saving Rock and Lord;
turning instead to every god and evil forbidden by God’s great Word.
They sacrificed to gods unknown, forgetting Him Who had made them His own.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior’s fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Today’s Text: Deuteronomy 32.15-21

Preparation

1. What would cause Israel to turn away from God?
2. How would the Lord respond to that?

Meditation

Moses is now looking into the future, showing the people where they will end up when they turn away from the Lord. Once they have begun to know the rich blessings of God, the people will “grow fat” on them, and will turn from God to idols (v. 15). They will take up the idolatrous ways of their pagan neighbors (vv. 16, 17), and this will provoke the jealousy and anger of the Lord. In doing so, they would depart from the practices of their forebears (v. 17) and forget the greatness and graciousness of God.

God, in response, would grant them what they had chosen – independence from Him, His covenant, blessings, and favor (vv. 20, 21). Ultimately, He will bring a nation against them to enslave them (v. 21). Thus we should learn that the alternative to obeying God unto life and blessing is captivity to the world and its powers to deprive and oppress.

The hope was that, by remembering and singing this song, this situation could be averted. That it was not indicates the low esteem in which the people held the Word of the Lord, and the great God Who had saved them.

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Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Through the ages God's lament toward His chosen people is the same. They, and we, have failed Him. We have turned to other gods, sacrificed to demons, and are unmindful of our Rock Who has begotten us, and forgotten the God Who fathered us. (vs. 16-18) We have betrayed Him. And although He reminds us that His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His ways (Is. 55.9), He still uses our human experiences to convey what is happening. We are to imagine that we are the perfect spouse, and yet our beloved has chosen another who is perverse and in whom is no faith. Or, we are the perfect parent, but our children prefer and have chosen others who are abominable persons. Think of it. Our perfect Creator has been set aside by us because we choose to scornfully esteem His salvation. We have provoked Him and moved Him to anger (vs. 21). He is completely justified to spurn us. Jesus bemoaned the same about the church in Ephesus, whose behavior was a bit better than the Israelites, but their hearts were just as unfaithful: "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love." But then He adds these words of hope and redemption: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works". And tagged on to that hope, these words of warning: "or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent." (Rev. 2.4,5) The Song of Moses: same song, second verse. When will we ever learn?

Reflection

1. How can we know when God's blessings are beginning to become more important than God?
2. What does it look like when a church loses its first love? How can they find their way back?
3. How can singing hymns help us to keep our focus on the Lord, more than on the things He does for us?

Behold, then, the reason why the Law was written down, that God's truth might be witnessed in the continued lapse of ages.
John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 31.9*

Lord, let Your Word be in my mind, on my heart, and in all my life, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.19-21

Ask the Lord to show you any areas of your life where you are beginning to prefer His blessings more than Him. Repent and renew your love for the Lord.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.19-21, 3

(Sagina: [And Can It Be](#))

God saw and turned His face away, their sins too wicked to behold.
Jealous and angry in that sad day, He swore to condemn their acts so bold.
He called a nation to arise to judge and condemn them before His eyes.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

4 The Curses of God

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.29-31

Oh, that they were wise, *that* they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end!
How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had surrendered them?
For their rock *is* not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves *being* judges.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.29-31

(Sagina: [And Can It Be](#))

Let now the people all be wise, and know that God is their Rock and Lord.
Let them no longer His ways despise, but turn and follow in His Word.
In Him is victory full and free; no god like Him could ever be.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 32.22-31

Preparation

1. How does God show His displeasure against His people?
2. What would the people be wise to do at such a time?

Meditation

God threatens to unleash His anger against His people as they turn from Him to the idols of their neighbors (v. 22). His people will deserve the fiercest wrath and judgment He can muster: disasters, war, hunger, pestilence, wild beasts, and more (vv. 22-24). They will be destroyed from without and know only terror within when God comes to judge them (v. 25).

So intense will God's wrath be that, were it not for the mocking and boasting of His enemies, He would blot Israel out of His memory altogether (vv. 26, 27). He will not give His enemies a chance to boast, as though they, and not He, had brought about the destruction and captivity of the nation of Israel (v. 27).

God's people have rejected His counsel and thus have lost all understanding of right, good, and their holy, set-apart purpose (v. 28). God does not delight in judging His people. He longs for them to wake up, smell the coffee, and consider their purpose and end (v. 28). He wants them to recover from their straying and stupor without His having to discipline them so harshly. Yet He will sell them to their enemies until they return to Him, recognizing and confessing Him as their Rock (v. 31).

If God's people had taken Moses seriously, and had learned and sung this song, and passed it on to the generations that succeeded them, these terrors might have been enough to keep Israel from drifting from the counsel and understanding of Lord to embrace things and idols instead. If we learn to sing this song, it might help to keep us from straying from Him as well.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Anger comes in many forms: immediate rage, a slow burn, passive aggression, gaslighting, and permanence. All of it is unpleasant; and it is never a happy thing to be on the receiving end of it. We know angry people and we can be angry people. Sometimes others' rage or ours is understandable and perhaps even justified; and we are given guidance as to how to deal with it (Eph. 4.26). In this passage (Deut. 32.22), God's anger toward His people was justified and terrifying. "For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; it shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." God shouts out, "For who is like Me? Who will arraign Me? And who *is* that shepherd who will withstand Me?" (Jer. 50.44) Can you hear and feel the rumble of His anger? Me too, and frankly I don't want to be on the receiving end of it. Singing and remembering the song of Moses is a good start. Obedience to and love for God follows; and then knowing and rejoicing that Jesus stands in between God's terrifying wrath and us. "But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, He *was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed...the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53.5,6).

Reflection

1. Is it hard for you to think of God as being angry? Does God still get angry about sin? How should knowing that affect our attitude toward sin?
2. How can believers help one another to keep from falling under the discipline of the Lord?
3. We need to deal with our sins continuously, lest we build up a pattern of departing from the Lord by degrees. How would you counsel a new believer to do this?

The cause is assigned why God had almost blotted out altogether the memory of the people, viz., because their faculty was incurable: for He does not merely indicate that their conduct was rash and inconsiderate, because they lacked reason mid discretion: but that they could be by no means brought to their senses, and, in fact, that not one drop of sagacity existed in them.
John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 32.28*

Let Your face shine on me, O God, for I seek Your face to help me...

Closing Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.22-28

Ask the Lord to search your heart, that He might bring to light any hardness against Him, show you any sins harboring in your soul, and lead you to repentance and renewal.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.22-28

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

Then is the wrath of God inflamed; He brings disasters, blight, and woes,
Judging the people who bear His Name, and counting them among His foes.
Dangers without and terrors within shall strike His people for their sin.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

But for the boasting of His foes, the Lord would dash and destroy His own;
He would abandon them to their woes, and leave them to struggle all alone.
For they His counsel have despised and turned from Him to live in lies.

Refrain, v. 3

5 God of Judgment and Compassion

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.42, 43

“I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword shall devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the heads of the leaders of the enemy.”
“Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people;
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And render vengeance to His adversaries;
He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people.”

Sing Deuteronomy 32.42, 43, 3

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

God makes His arrows drunk with blood; all wicked flesh shall feel His sword.
All who oppose Him and hate the good, will know the judgment of the Lord.
Come, nations all, rejoice with us in Him who delivers those who in Him trust.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior’s fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Today’s Text: Read Deuteronomy 32.32-43

Preparation

1. When does God have compassion on His people?
2. How does God identify Himself in this passage?

Meditation

God’s judgment of His people is just and thorough (vv. 32-35). He will not stand by and allow us to destroy ourselves with sin. He moves to bring us the consequences of our choice in forms of discipline and judgment that are never pleasant.

But these not His last word. Though He brings discipline upon us from time to time, His compassion never fails; He will restore us to Himself when He sees that we have stopped trusting in our own power and have acknowledged our need to be set free from our sin (v. 36).

His compassion comes with a reminder of the futility of trusting in false gods of any kind (vv. 37, 38). He alone is God, Who makes alive and heals (v. 39). He stands ready to judge His people, because He has called us to righteousness (Matt. 6.33), and He intends to see that calling through to glory (Heb. 12.3-11; Ps. 115.1). Remember this, and remember how bitter the judgment of God can be against our bitter and poisonous sins (vv. 39-42, 32, 33).

As you experience the renewing, refreshing, and restoring grace of God, don’t keep it to yourself. Tell it to others, and call on them to join you in celebrating the greatness, graciousness, power, and faithfulness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Moses’ intro was soft and plaintive: “Give ear...hear...Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass” (Deut. 32.1, 2). Cue up the sound of violins sweetly playing back-up. Moses’ outro was loud and forceful: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people;

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for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people” (Deut. 32.43). Bring in the concert organ, trumpets, and kettle drums for accompaniment. Then Jesus, with a choir of thousands sings:

“And behold, I am coming quickly,
And My reward is with Me,
To give to every one according to his work.
I am the Alpha and the Omega,
The Beginning and the End,
The First and the Last.”
“Surely I am coming quickly.” (Rev. 22.12, 13, 20)

The Song for the Ages. Let’s learn it and sing it!

Reflection

1. What do the Scriptures mean when they tell us that God is compassionate? Can you give an example of how His compassion has reached you?
2. It might be easy – and we might be tempted – to take advantage of God’s compassionate nature. How can we keep from doing that?
3. How does the Song of Moses call you to take your place in God’s covenant?

...so conspicuous was the favor of God towards the Israelites, that the knowledge and favor of it should diffuse itself far and wide, and be renowned even among the Gentiles. For Scripture thus magnifies some of the more memorable exertions of God's power, especially when reference is made to the redemption of the elect people, and commands His praise to be proclaimed among the nations, since it would be by no means fitting that it should be confined within the narrow limits of Judea. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Deuteronomy 32.43

Lord, use me today to bring the Good News of Your delivering grace to...

Closing Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.32-41

Call on the Lord for cleansing from sin, to keep your foot from slipping today, and to have compassion on and bless you with His Presence.

Deuteronomy 32.32-41, 3

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

See the corruption of the land; like Sodom and Gomorrah they shall fall.
Bitter the fruit on every hand, their poisonous venom is over all.
God stores this up within His heart, to give His people their woeful part.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior’s fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

What, though He judge His people sore, He will have compassion on their soul,
Once they repent to sin no more, and turn to the Lord to make them whole.
Let them no longer vain idols trust, but look to God alone as just.

Refrain, v. 3

“Now see that I am God alone; no other gods exist but Me.
I have the power, all on My own, to heal, deliver, and set you free.
All those who hate Me I will repay with vengeance and judgment on that day.”

Refrain, v. 3

6 Life and Death

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.4

He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.3, 4

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

He is the Rock, His work is sure, and justice defines His every Word:
A God of truth, upright and pure, both just and righteous is our Lord!
Perfect is He in all His ways, without injustice, deserving praise!

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 32.44-52

Preparation

1. How did Moses stress the importance of singing this song?
2. Why was Moses not permitted to enter the land of promise?

Meditation

The book of Deuteronomy continually holds out the contrast between what God chooses for His people – obedience and life – and what His people choose for themselves – disobedience and death. The Song of Moses aptly summarizes this theme, as do these last verses of Deuteronomy 32.

Moses strictly instructed the people to learn and sing this song, and all the words of God's Law, and to teach them to their children (vv. 44-46). This would not be a "futile thing" for them to do, because the Law, and the song that reminds them to obey God's Law, gives God's instructions for life (v. 47). If they want to live and prolong their days, they will do as Moses commands.

It's sad that many people today consider meditating on God's Law and internalizing and obeying it more consistently (Pss. 1; 119.9-11), a "futile thing." They must consider it so, since they give so little time and effort to it. The same with singing the Song of Moses, the psalms, and other great hymns that remind us of our calling and duty, and of God's warnings for disobedience. Singing is just not something we regard as essential or helpful. Those who believe this say of singing that it is a "futile thing." Singing can stir our hearts to pay more attention to God's Word, so that we delight in it and in Him, obey and serve Him, and shine the light of His glory and truth into our world. The state of Christian faith today bears sad testimony to the truth of Moses' words concerning the cost of failing to hear and heed the Law of God.

Not even Moses could escape the judgment of God for disobedience. His failure to obey God cost him entrance to the land of promise (vv. 48-52). And do we think we're somehow better than Moses? That we can disregard God's Law and fail to sing His praises, and still know fullness of life in Christ?

We're kidding ourselves. Tragically.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Life: the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body. Futile: serving no useful

purpose; completely ineffective. Your choice. Which would you rather be? Which would you rather exemplify? The answer hinges on one decision. What will you do with Jesus Christ and His Law? “Set your hearts on all the words...” (v. 46). Yes. “My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end” (Ps. 119:112 NIV). “...you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law” (v. 46). Yes. “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6.7). “For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life...” (v. 47). Yes! “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.” “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he die, he shall live.” “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (Jn. 1.4; 5.21; 6.63; 11.25; 14.6) Futility or life? Life or death? “...therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live...” (Deut. 30.19). “For there is born to you this day...a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Lk. 2.11) The choice. The decision. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15).

Reflection

1. Why does it make sense that Christians should choose life by obeying the commandments of God?
2. Meditate on Matthew 24.12. How does this warning apply to our day?
3. Choosing life is a daily and moment-by-moment calling. How would you counsel a new believer to improve in carrying out this calling?

...lest, then, the teaching of the Law should be despised or forgotten, or, from being but languidly received, should gradually be obliterated from their minds, be as it were spurs them up by the vehemence of this Song, and commands that their posterity should be instructed in it, in order that their attention may be aroused by its menaces. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 32.46*

Lord, I would sing of Your grace throughout this day, to help me remember that...

Closing Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.9-14

Pray that God will guard you and all His people today, and that He will advance His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven through us all.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.9-14, 3

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

Think now on all the days of old, the generations passed above,
how, by our fathers and elders told, we learned of God's redeeming love.
When He the nations set apart, He kept His people in His heart.

Refrain, v. 3

I will proclaim our Savior's fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

Just like an eagle guards its nest, and spreads its wings to shield its own,
takes them and shelters them in his breast, so God preserved them all alone.
No foreign god assistance brings: He carries them on His own wings.

Refrain, v. 3

He made His people lords of earth, to eat the produce of their fields,
lavished them all with creation's worth, and blessed their harvests and their yields.
He made their flocks and herds abound, and blessed the vintage of their ground.

Refrain, v. 3

7 Look on the Life-Side

Opening Prayer: Deuteronomy 32.1-4

“Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.
For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, His work *is* perfect;
For all His ways *are* justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright *is* He.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.1-4

(Sagina: [*And Can It Be*](#))

Give ear, O heav’ns, I will proclaim, and hear, O earth the words I tell:
Let now my teaching drop as rain, my speech as morning dew distill
as show’rs that fall on thirsty grass, and rain on tender herbs at last:
Refrain, v. 3
I will proclaim our Savior’s fame, and sing the greatness of His Name.

He is the Rock, His work is sure, and justice defines His every Word:
A God of truth, upright and pure, both just and righteous is our Lord!
Perfect is He in all His ways, without injustice, deserving praise!
Refrain, v. 3

Review Deuteronomy 32; meditate on Deuteronomy 32.1-4

Preparation

1. How does God want His people to think about His Word?
2. What does the Word of God principally proclaim?

Meditation

The Song of Moses was intended to be a kind of national anthem for the people of God, to serve in every generation as a reminder of the greatness and graciousness of God, and to warn His people against turning away from Him. Moses gave us only the words, which he may or may not have sung for the people. Every generation of the people of God needs to learn this song for themselves. It proclaims timeless truths that we must cherish in our hearts.

Primary among these is that God is great and good and loving. He cares for His people and provides for their every need. He invites people from every nation, tribe, and tongue to join with His people in the joy and salvation of the Lord (v. 43), and He promises to atone for their sins, and make them His own children.

Why would anyone *not* want to participate in this God and His goodness? Mostly, I suspect, because when they look at the people who confess themselves to *be* His children, they don’t find their lifestyles all that attractive, or even all that different from their own. When the people of God lust and froth over the same

things that unbelievers do – stuff, fun, and the right to decide which values to embrace – they don't see any reason to come to the Lord. What we show them, they've already got – minus all the guilt about sin and the interruptions of their Sundays.

When the people of God believe that His blessings, rather than He Himself, are their primary good, they are on the way to idolatry. The bulk of the Song of Moses is designed to tell us (a) how much God hates idolatry and (b) how bad idolatry is for those who drift into it. God will make His people captive to the world for which they pant, so that they cannot realize the fullness of His precious and very great promises. When we will not be captive to our good, great, and gracious God, we make ourselves captive to our times and all its fleeting allurements.

God is without injustice; He knows what He's doing, and whatever He does is just and right. This song could remind us of that, if only we would learn, sing, and teach it.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Without” sounds like a loss. Without food, without clothing, without health. How about, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”? (Jn. 8.7) Without sin would be great! Or, “Pray without ceasing...” (I Thess. 5.17) That would *definitely* be positive. Here's another, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jms. 2.26). We don't want to be without spirit or works, so that we end up in the loss category. But here is the point: God is perfect. And His work is perfect. Even when we are *not* without sin, we *don't* pray without ceasing, and we often are *without* good works. Here is what He is *without*: injustice. And only because of Jesus do we experience the life-side; and escape *without* death. How can it be? Here's how:

“*He is* the Rock, His work *is* perfect;
For all His ways *are* justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.” Deuteronomy 32.4

Reflection

1. How does Jesus satisfy the justice of God on our behalf?
2. We don't keep the Law in order to *be* justified, but because we *have been* justified, by grace through faith. Explain.
3. What does Moses mean by saying that his teaching is like the rain, or like the dew? Is this your experience of reading Moses? Explain.

God is not only true, but the Truth itself. At any rate, this applies to the persons who pay entire allegiance to the word of God, for their expectations shall never be frustrated. Thus the people are indirectly reprov'd for their unbelief, in that they deserted God, whose faithfulness was not only tried and proved, but who is the very fountain of truth. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 32.4*

Rain on my soul, Lord, with the refreshing health of Your Word, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm Deuteronomy 32.9-14

Praise God for His Word. Call on Him to let His Word dwell in you richly (Col. 3.16). Look to the day ahead, and commit to following God's Word in all things.

Sing Deuteronomy 32.9-14, 3

(Sagina: [And Can It Be](#))

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how, by our fathers and elders told, we learned of God's redeeming love.

The Song of Moses: Deuteronomy 32

When He the nations set apart, He kept His people in His heart.

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Refrain, v. 3

The Song of Moses: Deuteronomy 32

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How does the Song of Moses want the people of God to think about His Word?
2. According to the Song of Moses, what happens to draw people away from loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength?
3. How does God feel about our drifting from Him? What does He do when we drift?
4. What are some examples of the kinds of idols people make and serve in our day?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Deuteronomy 32? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.