

Expressing Thankfulness

Lesson for October 9, 2022

Unit II: Out of Slavery to Nationhood

Scriptural Background: Deuteronomy 31:30-32:47

Printed Text: Deuteronomy 32:3-6, 10-14,18

Key verse: “He said to them, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.”
(Deuteronomy 32:46, NIV)

Word Study

Hook

It is gratitude that prompted an old man to visit an old broken pier on the eastern seacoast of Florida. Every Friday night, until his death in 1973, he would return, walking slowly and slightly stooped with a large bucket of shrimp. The sea gulls would flock to this old man, and he would feed them from his bucket. Many years before, in October, 1942, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was on a mission in a B-17 to deliver an important message to General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea. But there was an unexpected detour which would hurl Captain Eddie into the most harrowing adventure of his life.

Somewhere over the South Pacific the Flying Fortress became lost beyond the reach of radio. Fuel ran dangerously low, so the men ditched their plane in the ocean...For nearly a month Captain Eddie and his companions would fight the water, and the weather, and the scorching sun. They spent many sleepless nights recoiling as giant sharks rammed their rafts. The largest raft was nine by five. The biggest shark...ten feet long.

But of all their enemies at sea, one proved most formidable: starvation. Eight days out, their rations were long gone or destroyed by the salt water. It would take a miracle to sustain them. And a miracle occurred. In Captain Eddie's own words, "Cherry," that was the B- 17 pilot, Captain William Cherry, "read the service that afternoon, and we finished with a prayer for deliverance and a hymn of praise. There was some talk, but it tapered off in the oppressive heat. With my hat pulled down over my eyes to keep out some of the glare, I dozed off."

Now this is still Captain Rickenbacker talking..."Something landed on my head. I knew that it was a sea gull. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. Everyone else knew too. No one said a word, but peering out from under my hat brim without moving my head, I could see the expression on their faces. They were staring at that gull. The gull meant food...if I could catch it."

And the rest, as they say, is history. Captain Eddie caught the gull. Its flesh was eaten. Its intestines were used for bait to catch fish. The survivors were sustained and their hopes renewed because a lone sea gull, uncharacteristically hundreds of miles from land, offered itself as a sacrifice. You know that Captain Eddie made it.

And now you also know...that he never forgot. Because every Friday evening, about sunset...on a lonely stretch along the eastern Florida seacoast...you could see an old man walking...white-haired, bushy-eyebrowed, slightly bent. His bucket filled with shrimp was to feed the gulls...to

remember that one which, on a day long past, gave itself without a struggle...like manna in the wilderness.

Paul Aurandt, "*The Old Man and the Gulls*"

In today's lesson, Moses reminds the Israelites to adopt the same attitude of gratitude toward God. Never forget who brought you through!

Key Terms

1. **Ascribe** (verse 3) – to give; to lay something to the account of a person or thing.
2. **Corrupt(ed)** (verse 5) – to ruin, act corruptly; depraved; characterized by improper conduct (such as bribery or the selling of favors); putrid, tainted; adulterated or debased.
3. **Established** (verse 6) – to place something securely and permanently in a position, situation, or condition; to be (made) firm; appointed; confirmed; “formed” (NIV).
4. **Foolish** (verse 6) – void of understanding or sound judgment; weak in intellect; applied to general character; senseless; disgraceful.
5. **Greatness** (verse 3) – magnificence; magnitude; notable; remarkable; exceptionally good.
6. **Name** (verse 3) – memorial; reputation.
7. **Publish** (verse 3) – proclaim; to bring out to the light; To discover or make known to mankind or to people in general what before was private or unknown; to divulge, as a private transaction.

Lesson Background

Deuteronomy contains considerable legal detail, but with an emphasis to the people rather than the priests. As Moses called the second generation of Israel to trust the Lord and be obedient to His covenant made at Horeb (Sinai), he illustrated his point with references to Israel's past history. He reminded Israel of her rebellion against the Lord at Horeb (9:7 – 10:1), and at Kadesh (1:26-46), which brought devastating consequences. He also reminded her of the Lord's faithfulness in giving victory over her enemies (2:24 – 3:11; 29:2, 7-8). Most importantly, Moses called the people to take the land that God had promised by oath to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4). Moses not only looked back, he also looked ahead and saw that Israel's future failure to obey God would lead to her being scattered among the nations before the fulfillment of His oath to the patriarchs would be completed (4:25-31; 29:22 – 30:10; 31:26-29).

For 38 years after they had refused to enter Canaan, the Israelites remained in the wilderness of Paran and at Kadesh-barnea, until the old generation died off. Then they resumed their journey by a long detour around Edom. Finally, they were encamped in Moab, awaiting final instructions to go over and possess the land God had promised to their fathers. It was a most exciting and momentous occasion.

According to the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses took this occasion to deliver three addresses to the people of Israel, all of them farewell addresses, because he had been told that he could not enter the land with the people. The substance of the addresses is found in Deuteronomy, with the first being delivered “on this side Jordan, in the land of Moab” (1:5). The second one, if the words of 4:44-49 are intended as a heading for the second portion and not as a summary of the first, was given “on this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon

king of the Amorites” (4:46). The third was simply “in the land of Moab” (29:1). Quite possibly the same location is intended for all three messages. The final four chapters (31-34), contain final matters associated with the end of Moses’ leadership of Israel.

There are at least three songs that Moses wrote. One was sung after the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15), one is recorded in Psalm 90, and the other was written in the last days of Moses’ life, in Deuteronomy 32 portions of today’s lesson).

As his time on earth drew to a close, Moses tied up several loose ends in his ministry, following God’s instructions in setting everything in order. God told Moses to write a song, commonly called “The Song of Moses,” and teach it to the people (Deuteronomy 31:19, 30). The Lord then commissioned Joshua, Moses’ replacement (verse 23). Finally, Moses wrote down the entire Law as he had received it from God (verse 24) and gave it to the Levites to keep with the ark of the covenant (verse 25).

God required the Israelites to learn the Song of Moses in anticipation of their future rebellion against God’s commands in the Promised Land. God knew that, despite His blessings, Israel would turn their backs on Him and follow other gods, bringing divine judgment. When that happened, the song they had learned generations previous would *“be a witness . . . against them. When many disasters and calamities come on them, this song will testify against them”* (Deuteronomy 31:19, 21). The Song of Moses had both a prophetic purpose (it predicted the nation’s falling away) and an instructive purpose (it taught the faithfulness of God and the consequences of sin).

The song that Moses recited to the people takes up the better part of chapter 32. Deuteronomy 32:44 says that Joshua aided Moses in the recitation of this inspired song. The same day that Israel learned the Song of Moses, God directed Moses to climb Mt. Nebo, where Moses would be laid to rest (verses 48–50).

The song begins with a universal call to listen, followed by praise of the just, faithful, and upright God (Deuteronomy 32:1–4). In contrast to God’s faithfulness is Israel’s unfaithfulness (verses 5–6). The song proceeds to recite the history of Israel from their time of bondage in Egypt, through their wilderness wanderings, to their established place in the Promised Land (verses 7–14). The Song of Moses then becomes prophetic: Israel’s future ingratitude and idolatry are predicted, as are the judgments of God for their sin (verses 15–31). Then God promises to avenge Israel against their (and His) enemies, showing compassion on His people (verses 32–42). The song ends on a joyful note, as God’s punishment is past, righteousness is restored, and the land of Israel cleansed (verse 43).

A major theme of the Song of Moses is God’s faithfulness. He is called “the Rock” four times in the song (Deuteronomy 32:15, 18, 30–31). Even as God’s people are chasing whims and trusting feeble gods, God remains their steadfast, unchanging Source of Salvation. We see this in today’s lesson.

Lesson In Depth

I. Forgetting to Remember (Deuteronomy 32: 3-6)

Verses 1 and 2. Combined with verse 3 provide the introduction to Moses' song. Moses begins with a solemn appeal to heaven and earth, concerning the truth and importance of what he was about to say. His doctrine is the gospel, the speech of God, the doctrine of Christ; the doctrine of grace and mercy through him, and of life and salvation by him. This song was written down and was to be sung by the people of Israel. Notice, Moses calls the heavens and earth (verse 1) to make note of this. Moses will stand before the people and recite this song.

Ascribe ye greatness unto our God: This command refers to the greatness of God revealed in His acts of omnipotence. To ascribe greatness means to give Him what He alone deserves. We don't add a measure to His greatness, but we reflect back to Him the magnitude that He inherently has.

Moses had never stopped proclaiming the great I AM to the people. We remember, God had revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. He also told Moses His name was I AM. It is the greatness of God that Moses wants them to realize and accept. Moses is encouraging them to praise God themselves.

The Rock: This word, representing the stability and permanence of God, was placed at the beginning of the verse for emphasis and was followed by a series of phrases which elaborated the attributes of God as the Rock of Israel. It is one of the principal themes in this song (see verses 15, 18, 30-31), stressing the unchanging nature of God in contrast with the fickle nature of the people. Moses would surely associate the Rock as God. The Rock that brought forth water enough for nearly three million people symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of God's "work is perfect": God's way is perfect (2 Samuel 22:31). His knowledge is perfect (Job 37:16). God has never made a mistake. He will not mar that record when guiding His children (Psalm 18:2).

II. Disregarding God's Grace (Deuteronomy 32: 10-14, 14)

In the verses following the last outline and prior to this one, Moses gives particular instances of God's kindness and concern for Israel.

Moses reminds the Israelites to "Remember the days of old". This was a call to reflect on past history and to inquire about the lesson to be learned. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt and their establishment as God's people is to be remembered from generation to generation. Moses tells of the dividing of the earth to the several nations and giving to everyone their part and portion to possess and inherit. This was the work of God. In the whole plan for the world, God had as His goal the salvation of His chosen people. God ordained a plan where the number of nations (70 according to Genesis chapter 10), corresponded to the number of the children of Israel (70 according to Genesis 46:27). Further, as God gave the nations their lands, He established their boundaries, leaving Israel enough land to sustain their expected population.

In the days of Abraham, God had promised this land as an inheritance for the descendants of Abraham. God knew ahead of time where they would live, and how much land would be required. He blessed this land and prepared it for an inheritance for His chosen family. This is the reason why the Lord so early provided a portion or inheritance for the children of Israel in the land of Canaan. Because they were His part, His portion, His inheritance, which He chose by lot for Himself, or allotted to Himself. Whom He chose to be His special and peculiar people. For though all the world is His, He only reserved a part for himself, which he separated from all the rest, and considers as his portion and inheritance (see Psalm 33:12).

In this section of the lesson (verses 10-14), the whole description of what God did for Israel is figurative. Israel is like a man in the horrible desert in danger of death, without food or water, who is rescued by the Lord. The goodness of God is depicted. He is pictured as a Father-figure, caring for His people in every dimension of their lives, bringing them out of the land, and guiding and providing for them during their travels.

He found him in a desert land: Not by chance were they found, but as it were looking out and seeking for Israel. He did, indeed, manifest Himself to Israel in Egypt; but it was in the wilderness of Sinai that God found them in an eminent manner, revealed His will to them, entered into covenant with them, and imparted Himself, and his grace and blessing to them. By this word *found*, Moses also signifies both their lost condition in themselves, and that their recovery was not from themselves, but only from God, who sought and found them out by His grace.

In a waste howling wilderness: Israel was in a desert land with no food and water. God fed them miraculously the manna, which fell from heaven. The Rock brought forth water and quenched their thirst. The Lord actually birthed a people of God in this wilderness journey. God Himself, went with them to lead them in the smoke and fire. He was their protection. The countries around them feared the God of Israel. God wanted Israel to show Him to the world. His eye was on Israel, His people. In a place destitute of all the necessities and comforts of life, which also was a type of that desolate and comfortless condition in which all men are before the grace of God finds them out; where, instead of the voices of men, is nothing heard but the howlings and yellings of ravenous birds and beasts.

He led him: God conducted Israel from place to place by His cloudy pillar and providence. Or, He compassed them about by His provident care, watching over them and preserving them on every side.

As the apple of His eye: This expresses something enormously precious, a part of the body that is innately protected (Proverbs 7:2). The specific meaning is the pupil of the eye, the most important and most protected part. Because Israel is so precious to God, there will be judgment on any nation that mistreats her due to politics, preference, or popularity. What a striking idea does this give us of the care which God took of Israel. And similar to this is the care which He takes of all His spiritual Israel, His true people, and servants!

As an eagle stirreth up her nest: There is much theological debate over this portion of the verse. Some writers believe it wrong to liken God to an eagle. However, in keeping with the symbolic meaning of this passage we will continue in that vein.

No doubt the immature brood are much warmer and more comfortable in the nest than when they are turned out of it. The Israelites were by no means enamored with the prospect of leaving the flesh-pots and the onions and the farmhouses that they had got for themselves in Goshen, to tramp with their cattle through the wilderness. They went after Moses with considerable disinclination.

Here we have, then, as the first thing needed, God's loving compulsion to effort. To 'stir up the nest' means to make a man uncomfortable where he is sometimes by the prickings of his conscience, which are often the voices of God's Spirit; sometimes by changes of circumstances, either for the better or for the worse; and oftentimes by sorrows. The straw is pulled out of the nest, and it is not so comfortable to lie in; or a bit of it develops a sharp point that runs into the half-feathered skin and makes the fledgling glad to come forth into the air. We all shrink from change. What should we do if we did not have it?

Fluttereth over her young: rather, broods over, nestles, or cherishes. The Lord exercised His loving care for Israel like an eagle caring for its young, especially as they were taught to fly. As they began to fly and had little strength, they would start to fall. At that point, an eagle would stop their fall by spreading its wings so they could land on them, so the Lord has carried Israel and not let the nation fall. He had been training Israel to fly on His wings of love and omnipotence.

In this case, the eagle's care of her young is symbolic of the care of God for His people. Her wings protect her young from the storm and the rain. She carries them, until they learn to fly. This wilderness wandering was full of the supernatural care of the LORD for His people. He took them places they could not have gone, such as through the Red Sea. During this journey, God taught them His ways.

Moses gives particular instances of God's kindness and concern for them. The eagle's care for her young is a beautiful emblem of Christ's love, who came between Divine justice and our guilty souls, and bare our sins in his own body on the tree. And by the preached gospel, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, He stirs up and prevails upon sinners to leave Satan's bondage. In verses 13,14, are emblems of the conquest believers have over their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, in and through Christ. Also, of their safety and triumph in him; of their happy frames of soul, when they are above the world, and the things of it. This will be the blessed case of spiritual Israel in every sense in the latter day.

So, the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him: Moses makes clear that God alone carried Israel through all its struggles and victories, thus depriving the people of any excuse for voluntarily and consciously abandoning their faith in the God for interest in false gods. When the fire or smoke, lifted from the tabernacle and moved, the people followed. He was their God, and they were His people. There were no false gods among them.

He made him ride on the high places: To conquer their strongest holds on the mountains, and their cities fenced with walls of the greatest height and strength: *to ride upon* being to subdue and conquer. Or He put him in possession of a country full of lofty and fruitful mountains, and therefore called the high places of the earth.

To suck honey out of the rock: God placed Israel in a country where honey flowed from the very rocks, the bees making it in the holes thereof, or in the hollow trees that grew upon or among the rocks.

Oil out of the flinty rocks: Olive-trees growing and bearing fruit best in rocky or hilly places. The expressions are proverbial and denote a most fertile land.

These metaphoric phrases regarding honey and oil point to the most valuable products coming out of the most unproductive places. The **LORD** was their provider. They had no need for food. God fed them. He caused Israel to defeat the nations before them. They received their inheritance of the land of milk and honey.

Butter of kine: The Hebrew word used designates milk in a solid or semi-solid state, as thick cream, curd, or butter. As distinguished from this is the **milk of sheep:** Which they give, though not in such plenty as the kine, yet what is very wholesome and nourishing. Where the word used properly denotes fresh milk, milk in a fluid state, and with all its richness (fatness) in it. Their milk is sweeter and more nourishing, and the butter made of it is the fattest: **with fat of lambs;** or fat lambs, rich and delicious food. "Fat" being a figurative expression for the best (Numbers 18:12).

Rams of the breed of Bashan: Literally, **rams, sons of Bashan;** reared in Bashan, a district famous for its cattle.

With the fat of kidneys of wheat; **with the kidney-fat of wheat:** The richest fat, the best and most nutritious wheat.

And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape: The blood of the grape is the expressed juice of the grape, which, being red, is compared to blood. The original word (to boil up, to foam, to rise in bubbles) describes this juice as it appears when pressed into a vessel, when the surface of the liquid is covered with froth or foam.

The lesson now skips verses 15-17. In these verses are two instances of the wickedness of Israel, each was apostasy (abandonment) from God. These people were called *Jeshurun*, an upright people. But they soon lost the reputation both of their knowledge and of their righteousness. They indulged their appetites, as if they had nothing to do but to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it. Those who make a god of themselves, and a god of their bellies, in pride and wantonness. And cannot bear to be told of it, thereby forsake God, and show they esteem him lightly. For this foolish apostasy, the Lord will severely judge Israel. This visitation of anger is in the form of a divine resolution to punish Israelites whenever they pursue idols.

Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful: Moses here returns to the thought of Deuteronomy 32:15, for the purpose of expressing it with greater force, and also of leading on to the description he is about to give of the Lord's acts towards the nation who had so revolted from Him. Forsaking the rock of its salvation, Israel gave itself up to the service of worthless idols.

And hast forgotten God that formed thee: For the rock they were unmindful of and forgot is the true God and eternal life, the essential Word of God. Him the Jewish nation forgot. They forgot the characters given of Him in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. And therefore, they knew Him not when He came and fulfilled the voices of the prophets, they were

ignorant of in condemning Him. Hence, they were unmindful of His person, His offices, His works, His benefits, and the great salvation by him. As indeed too many are that call themselves Christians.

They soon forgot the God, who created them. God created man from the dust of the earth. This speaks of the physical birth. God also gave new life to the family of Jacob when He brought them out of Egypt.

“Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Deuteronomy 6:12)

The Rock was their Deliverer. They drank of the Rock of the water of life.

Conclusion

Chapter 32 is the song that God gave Moses to write, which is to remind Israel of their rebellion, and is a witness to God for their rebellion.

It begins beautifully with God commanding the heavens and earth to listen to the words of His mouth, and in doing so His teaching or doctrine will drop as the rain.

God will publish the name of the Lord and attribute greatness to our God.

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.”

The song goes into Israel’s foolishness against God, and how God cherished them because His portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. The song speaks of the older days when the Lord delivered the Israelites from Egypt. This was when He took them out of a dry and barren land to lead them out of their suffering. He guarded and shielded His loved ones and chosen people. He says that He gave the Israelites an inheritance which was set aside for them. This was referred to as the Lord’s portion. God kept them as the apple of His eye. God blessed Israel with everything, but they became arrogant and took it for granted. They moved to serve other gods and when God saw this, He was angry with them.

Do you see something similar in 2022? Those who are corrupt are not the children of God because they bring Him shame. These are the people who do not appreciate the things that the Lord has done.