

“A Song for the Wayward Heart”

Deut 32

Sept 22, 2013

As we come to the Word of God this morning, let us not forget the powerful image of Jesus’ concluding words to the sermon on the mount. He said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall” (Matt. 7:24-27). In Deut. 32, we are going to see a very similar scenario unfold as Israel foolishly fails to build on the Rock of God’s character and finds herself in a catastrophic landslide.

Last week in Deut. 31:19-22, God instructed Moses to write a song that we now discover in Deut. 32 as a witness to testify against their wayward hearts in a future time of rebellion.

The overall purpose of this song is for wayward hearts to see the folly of their ways against the reality of God’s character. In other words...

We will never be convinced of the folly of our sin until we see it in the light of God’s perfect character.

This song will demonstrate the stark contrast between God’s steadfast character and Israel’s sinful ways.

So let’s analyze this song by breaking it down into 5 stanzas.

### 1. God’s character and Israel’s corruption (vs. 1-9)

The most practical thing you will see in this sermon today is who God is, which has tremendous implications for our lives.

One man said, “our greatest need is to know who God is. The most effective practical teaching in the world is teaching that gives people

a sense of who God is.”<sup>1</sup> A.W. Tozer said it this way, “what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Why? Because it shapes everything we think, believe, value, and do.

Here in the song of Deut. 32, Moses begins by singing of God’s remarkable character. Five times in this chapter he refers to God as the “Rock.” In fact, in verse 4 “The Rock” is God’s name! Moses establishes that God is absolutely trustworthy based on 6 qualities of the greatness of God.

- ✓ His work is perfect
- ✓ All His ways are just
- ✓ A God of faithfulness
- ✓ Without injustice
- ✓ Righteous
- ✓ Upright

Our knowledge and abilities are limited but God’s are not. We may not always understand His ways as He sees the big picture, but His character is unwavering so we can affirm that God is good in all that He does.

This is the God who has reached out to Israel. This is the God who has Fathered them; created them; established them (vs. 6).

Yet Israel has rejected Him (vs. 5). So Moses retorts in vs. 6, “*Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people?*” The picture here is that of a gracious and generous Father, a man of perfect integrity, who adopts a son and withholds nothing from his son only to be rejected by this son and not considered worthy of being called a father.

### 2. God’s care and Israel’s calloused rebellion (vs. 10-18)

These verses begin to lyrically describe all the good that God has done in caring for Israel (vs. 10). The picture here is one of rescue—like a boy stranded and ready to die of exposure in a fierce desert,

<sup>1</sup> Ajith Fernando, Deuteronomy, pg. 647.

God puts His arms around him, cares for him, and protects him as he would protect his own eyes in the midst of a fierce sand storm.

In vs. 11, God is pictured as an eagle caring for its young. Not only does He protectively hover over the nest, but He also stirs up the nest, teaching His young to fly and Himself catching them and carrying them so they will not fall.

Verse 12 clarifies that Yahweh alone can be credited for Israel's success and prosperity.

Yet how did Israel respond to such love and care and blessing? Verse 15 likens Israel to an old cow that kicks the very farmer who cares for her. Don't miss the calloused rejection of Israel's painful betrayal of her Father (vs. 15-18).

### 3. God's fury and man's folly (vs. 19-33)

In verses 19-22, we see the fury of God's wrath, which is simply the intensity of God's goodness against evil. God cannot smile on sin. He is good and cannot wink at evil. He is perfect; just in all His ways; a God of faithfulness and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. We must not presume upon God's grace!

Verse 22 could be no more intense. God is portrayed as a volcano about to erupt with a righteous, hot lava that burns with the intensity of hell. Why? God has lavished His blessing on His people only for them to squander their inheritance on worthless idols that defy God and His grace. ***They are trampling underfoot the grace of God!***

And do we not do the same? We presume upon God's grace; We spend our resources and our very life which God has given us to pursue earthly pleasures in place of God which cannot ultimately satisfy. And we say, "God will understand." We are the ones who do not understand that "friendship with the world is hostility toward God" (James 4:4). He will not waver. God is the Rock. He will not change. Only in Him can our security be found. → [Heb 10:26-31]

So what will God do in His righteous fury to those who reject Him? He will show them what will happen when they oppose God, the Rock (Deut. 32:23-25).

In fact, the only thing that will restrain God from utterly obliterating this rebellious people is God's reverence and jealous concern for His own glory among the nations (vs. 26-27). God would carry out His judgment through the hand of a pagan nation that He would raise up to utterly humiliate Israel. Later in vs. 30, one man would chase 1,000 Israelites and 2 men would put to flight 10,000. This could only happen at the hand of God who they now oppose in their sinful rebellion. Yet God, for the sake of His own glory, would not allow this pagan nation to be able to wrongly boast that they had triumphed over Israel and that certainly Israel's God would not have done this. God would leave a remnant through which He would one day vindicate His people for sake of His own glory.

Don't miss the magnificence of God's greatness here. God is using His enemies to discipline His own people so that His glory might be preserved and even enhanced as He brings salvation to the world through Israel's messiah, His own perfect, righteous Son. We draw out at least a general principle here: *"The welfare of the world depends on people knowing who God is and what He is like."*<sup>2</sup>

In light of the severity of God's judgment and His sovereign authority over all nations, not only is Israel foolish in rejecting their Rock, but equally foolish are Israel's enemies who fail to understand that they, too, will face divine judgment (vs. 28-31). Wisdom considers present choices in light of future consequences: *"What divine consequences can you expect in the future for your current desires and decisions?"*

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<sup>2</sup> Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy*, pg. 661.

#### 4. God's vengeance and Israel's vindication (vs. 34-42)

Verses 34-35 testify that God will exact payment for every penny in the debt of sin. The enemy nation may triumph for a while to serve God's purposes, but in the end God will exact vengeance on their sinful ways as well. They may triumph for a moment, but their downfall is hastening upon them.

How amazing is vs. 36! In the end God will vindicate His people and have compassion on them again when their strength is gone. In other words, God will allow them to be utterly stripped of any false security that they have imagined from trusting in false gods. He will strip them of any confidence that is not grounded on the solid Rock of God Himself.

Perhaps this is what God is doing in your life...

As He taunts their defeated gods in vss. 37-38, the message resounds even today: "*False gods never fail to fail.*"<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. God's supremacy and our salvation (vs. 39,43)

This final stanza resolves the dissonance of Israel's history by pointing to the hope of God's supremacy and our salvation (vs. 39). Here again is God, the Rock! The Rock of verse 4 had been rejected by His people yet in the end He stands securely and supremely to be acknowledged as the Sovereign Lord.

And it is precisely the supremacy of God, the solid Rock, unwavering in His promises, that will compose the final song of the ages in which all the nations will sing for joy (vs. 43).

Why would the nations, the Gentiles, rejoice in God's vengeance against them to vindicate Israel? Because it would be through the preservation of His people, Israel, that God would send Messiah, His perfect, righteous Son, to bring the blessing of salvation to those from every tribe and every nation who bow their knee to Jesus in

faith. And through Jesus, every nation will one day be brought under God's righteous rule and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is why in **Revelation 15**, there is a scene of heaven in which the redeemed, those who had been victorious over the beast, sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, saying, "*Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations.*"

<sup>4</sup> "*Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; For all the nations will come and worship before Thee, For Thy righteous acts have been revealed.*"<sup>4</sup>

And this is why in **Romans 15**, Paul wrote, "the Gentiles...glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "*Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, And I will sing to Thy name.*"

<sup>10</sup> *And again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."*

<sup>11</sup> *And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, And let all the peoples praise Him."*

<sup>12</sup> *And again Isaiah says, "There shall come the root of Jesse, And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, In Him shall the Gentiles hope."*

We who sit here this morning are a sampling of the nations, who rejoice because God has vindicated His people in order to send us His Son, our Salvation, in whom we trust. Just a few moments ago we, Gentiles, sang, "When My heart is overwhelmed I will look to You alone, God my Rock, God my Rock, God my Rock..."—The father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jeshua, Messiah, our Savior.

Did Jesus not say that all of the law and prophets testify of me?

So where are you building your house? Are you building on the one Solid Rock, or are you building on a sand bar?

There is only one way to build on the everlasting Rock. You must forsake your sinful rebellion and independence and crawl upon the Rock of Christ. "*If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart a person believes resulting in righteousness; and with the mouth he confesses,*

<sup>3</sup> Chris Wright, NIBC: Deut., pg. 303.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Exodus 15; also referred to as the Song of Moses.

*resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Rom. 10:9-13).*

I conclude with Moses’ final word of exhortation in Deut. 32:46-47: ***“Take to your heart all the words which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life...”***

[Prayer]

[“THE SOLID ROCK!!”]

Benediction: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 15:13)