

He Will Carry You

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 June 2020

Preacher: Canon David Short

[0 : 0 0] Well now we come today to the last in our series in the book of Deuteronomy and we're just going to focus on that little passage at the end of chapter 33 which is kind of a summary of everything.

Moses is 120 years old. His eyes are still very sharp and he still walks with a spring in his step. Growing up in the court of Pharaoh, having the Lord appear to him in a burning bush, calling him to lead his people out of slavery, he stood man to man against Pharaoh.

When the Lord brought them out to Mount Sinai under Moses' leadership, at the top of the mountain Moses lay face down for 80 days without food or water.

God says, I knew him face to face and he led the people through the howling wilderness and now on the edge of the promised land about to go in. He knows he's not going to go in.

He knows he's about to die. What are his last words? What does he say? What does he leave his people with? And here it is.

[1 : 1 1] Here's the summary. Chapter 33 verse 27. The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms. This is a fantastic verse.

It's been giving courage to believers for thousands of years. You can get t-shirts, tea towels, mugs, ornaments, drink coasters and refrigerator magnets with this text on it.

They're so loved. It's not possible to do justice to them. Moses wanted these words written on the hearts of his people because he knew they were no longer going to have him.

These are the last words of Moses in Deuteronomy. And it's a burst of joy. It's a celebration. It's a congratulation. Just look at the paragraph.

Verse 26 begins like this. There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies to his majesty.

[2 : 1 0] And then in verse 29. Happy are you, O Israel. Congratulations. Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? Lucky Israel.

Who has it as good as you, says one of the translations. And this celebration is playful, whimsical. You can see that because God calls his people Jeshurun.

That is a nickname of affection given by God to his people. And it's full of irony. It's like Little John in Robin Hood. Little John was the biggest and toughest guy of the bunch, but they called him Little John.

Jeshurun literally means straight one, straight arrow, straight shooter, honest and trustworthy. But Israel was the opposite. In fact, if you go back to chapter 32, the second chapter before this, God teaches Moses to sing a song.

And this is part of the song. Speaking about God, the rock, his work is perfect. All his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

[3 : 1 9] And then in the verses afterwards, God calls Israel a crooked and twisted generation, a foolish and a senseless people who forsook God and scoffed at the rock of their salvation.

So when God calls his people Jeshurun, he's speaking better of them than they really are because of his love and because of his grace and because of his mercy and because of what he is going to make of them.

And there's so much joy and confidence in these final words. Congratulations, Israel, for having a God like this. There is no other God but your God.

And if there's going to be any future for the people of God, it's not going to arise from their talents, good looks and hard work, but from God alone. Look at verse 26 again.

There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in his majesty. Even though you are twisted and broken, God brings help to you in his majesty.

[4 : 24] And the question we want to ask is, how does God help us? How does the help actually come? And there are two answers that Moses gives us. And the first is this.

The eternal God is your home. The text says the eternal God is your dwelling place. But dwelling place is just an ordinary word for home. It doesn't matter whether you live in a palace or a tent. It's not that God promises to make a home for us or to provide us with a home. He himself is our home, our eternal dwelling place.

And you might think, well, what use is an invisible home? It's like having an invisible \$50 million. I want something substantial, solid that I can trust and that I can see.

The basic view of the Bible is that everything that is visible depends upon the invisible God. God not only made everything at the beginning, but he continues to hold everything in existence by his word of power.

[5 : 26] In fact, if God were to take away his holding at any moment, everything would cease to exist. Heavens, earth, seas, mountains, humans, animals. The Bible teaches that God, though he is invisible, is more real and more solid and more trustworthy than anything we can see.

And the remarkable thing is that God offers himself to be our eternal home, not just when we die, but now. Because he is the eternal God, he never changes.

He has no beginning or end. He never draws back from us. He never grows weary. He never wears out. And the picture in these verses is that God surrounds his people.

God's not just over there in heaven waiting at a distance. He is above you. He rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in his majesty.

He is below you underneath of the everlasting arms. He goes before you to thrust out the enemy. He encompasses, he envelops, he enfolds all who have made him to be their home.

[6 : 34] He encircles, he enwraps, he embraces all who have made him to be their home. The eternal God is your dwelling place.

And there are still ups and downs and there's much danger and difficulty in opposition. God is not just offering to defend his people. He himself is our home and dwelling place.

Now, what does that mean? Well, home means two things primarily. Number one, it's a particular kind of relationship. I heard this week, home is the place where when you have to go there, they have to take you in.

It's a picture of true acceptance and love based on long knowing and being known. And when home is good, it is a place where I can be myself, where memories are formed, where my identity is strengthened, where I get a sense of rootedness from being accepted for who I am.

And we all know that homes can be a place of terrible rejection and bitterness. But this God, his way is perfect. He overflows with steadfast love and faithfulness.

[7 : 44] And despite our unfaithfulness and sporadic obedience and selfishness and blindness, God makes himself our home forever, not temporarily, doesn't just come and go.

And that means that every believer who has made God their home is alive with God now. Do you remember when Jesus was on earth, the spiritual skeptics came to Jesus?

These were skeptics who didn't believe anything invisible, anything they couldn't see or prove. And Jesus said to them, you do not know the power of God or the scriptures. Then he says, as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God?

I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Jesus' point is very simple.

He doesn't say, I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am the God now, present tense. And Abraham died a long time before Jacob was even born.

[8 : 48] God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Because the eternal God is our dwelling place. So the blessings of God don't stop when we die. When we die, we are translated into the presence of God in a new way.

Faith becomes sight. And the one who has carried us and held us all our lives now takes us to be with him. And all who have gone to be with him in faith are with him forever.

This is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He welcomes us and protects us and shelters us and comforts us and preserves us and cherishes us in this life. And since he is eternal, we never lose that dwelling place.

And the dwelling place, which is God, it never decays, never declines, never devalues. You know, our fathers and mothers in the faith who have now lived with God for hundreds of generations.

And after we have served God faithfully in this life, we will too. The eternal God is your dwelling place. It means a particular kind of relationship. But it also means safety and security.

[9 : 57] At their best, good homes provide security for our deepest longings. And God offers himself to us in such a way that we can hide in him, where no one can take us out of his hands.

And nothing can befall us unless it passes through him first. He's our strength. He's our rock. He's our refuge. He's our fortress. He's the place where we can rest and recover and recuperate, safe from enemies and from evil.

And through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we know more of his complete and eternal acceptance of us. And here is something we can truly rest in and truly rely on him.

We can rest on all our attempts to justify ourselves or to prove ourselves. Because in Christ Jesus, we have God's approval. There's nothing we can do that can add to his approval or take away from his approval.

This is the key to spiritual maturity and stability. It comes from the security of knowing the eternal love of God in Jesus Christ, that there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[11 : 15] You see, physical homelessness, and we have a lot of it in Vancouver, it's a terrible thing. It's a real issue. But spiritual homelessness is worse. You know, these are great words and you might love these words, but you've never placed your trust and your weight on God.

You've never really received his love and his approval and his forgiveness. Come to him. Learn to rest on him and his approval. Live your life on the basis of this safety because it opens the door to thriving and to courage and to truthfulness.

This is the first help that God gives us. The eternal God is your home. Secondly, underneath are the everlasting arms.

I think, if anything, this is closer and more personal and intimate. I now have a granddaughter, close to perfect.

Last summer we had our family holiday together and she sat in my arms looking out over the ocean for hours. And I loved it. And underneath her were my arms.

[12 : 28] And by the end of holding her, my arms were very tired. But God's arms never tire. They never fatigue.

They will never fail. They will never fade. They are the arms of God and they're everlasting. And this picture of arms is a way of describing God's personal strength extending to our personal weakness. And my great fear is that so many people go through life without anything underneath. In 1974, Philip Petit set up a high wire between the Twin Towers in Manhattan, the World Trade Center. It was before they'd been finished built and it was before they were occupied. And over a 45-minute period, he made eight passes on that high wire walking between the two buildings.

And the NYPD begged him to get off. But he kept going until it started raining 45 minutes later. And there's a documentary you can see on this.

[13 : 35] And watching him step out on that wire gives me a terrible feeling in my stomach. And it's absolutely terrifying to watch because there's nothing underneath him except the pavement, which is almost half a kilometer below him.

If he slips once, he is dead. And so many people live their lives without anything really underneath. No one to catch them when they fall.

No one to support them when they slip. No one to carry them or hold them up when they face danger or difficulty. No supernatural saviour or shepherd who will walk with them in this life and then down into the valley of the shadow of death with them.

No one to stand behind them and beside them on the day of judgment. And as human beings, the normal direction of our lives is down. We are born and we grow for some time, but we start going downhill pretty quickly.

Researchers at Simon Fraser University tell us that we start going downhill at the age of 24. I know, 24.

[14 : 48] We're declining and ageing. And gradually we go down until it's impossible to rise out of a chair. And then we go down into death and down into judgment. But it is God's nature to rise and to lift us.

He lifts our heads. He lifts our hearts. He raises our bodies to new life. And if you trust God, not only do you know his acceptance, but he will lift you to a new life now and forever.

Because underneath are the everlasting arms. There's so much comfort in this. If you are a child of God, you cannot go lower than the arms of God.

They're always underneath, bearing you up, catching you, carrying you. So is there something on your shoulders that you are carrying that is just too heavy and weighs you down, a burden that you can't bear?

God promises to bear the weight of your burden. He's quite able to bear the weight of a hundred worlds. He will not let you be crushed. He will not let you fall.

[15 : 59] Underneath are the everlasting arms. Is there something that brings you down or brings you low? You begin to imagine that you've gone too low for God to help you.

You cannot go lower than the arms of God. Underneath are the everlasting arms. What if God's ways don't make sense to you and you feel as though to obey him and fully commit to him would be just too hard for you?

It's too difficult to step out and take that risk because you might fall a long way. His arms are there to strengthen you, to uphold you so you can obey him.

And even if you do slip, underneath are the everlasting arms. It might be you find it impossible to forgive someone. And the only way to do it is to stand on the arms of God.

You don't have to hold on to grudges. You might find it very difficult to speak out and speak courageously for Jesus Christ. It feels like if you did that, it would be a thousand foot drop.

[17 : 00] Underneath are the everlasting arms. Have you fallen into sin and feel yourself sinking into temptation? Feel like you've gone down too far for God to forgive.

You cannot fall too far for God to forgive you. The only thing that would keep forgiveness away would be your pride and unbelief and trying to climb up the building on your own.

Underneath are the everlasting arms. You may have been brought down by some trouble that others around you find almost unimaginable. You feel like you're in too deep or maybe you've dug a hole that's too deep.

It might be financial. It might be emotional. You feel your feet are slipping out from underneath you. Listen, he will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone. He will support you.

He will not leave you because underneath are the everlasting arms. And even when we sink into death, when the time comes and you're on the edge of death and you're beyond human help, at that point God completely surrounds you and he bears you safely in his hands through the dark valley to himself because underneath are the everlasting arms.

[18 : 15] And if you have nothing underneath you when it comes time to die, what hope or comfort do you have? That you've lived a long life, that you've been successful financially, that you have a big family?

There is no real comfort. There is no real hope apart from the everlasting arms. And sometimes what God does in this life is he removes the things we rely on, all the props that we find our security in, to show us our need and the power and the grace of his everlasting arms.

I think that's why Jesus made this invitation when he said, Jesus is inviting us into the arms of the Father and he promises to give us rest, to know the strength and power and safety and cure of God. And friends, this is Deuteronomy in a word. Congratulations, people of God, for having a God like this, who rides to your help, who makes himself your everlasting home, who carries you on his everlasting arms because they are underneath you.

The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms. And we've seen the arms of God even more clearly, haven't we, in the person of Jesus Christ, who came down out of heaven, stepped into the form of a servant and stooped low in death on the cross and into the grave.

[19 : 58] And God raised him from the dead, rescuing us not from slavery in Egypt, but from a much greater slavery to sin and to death and to Satan himself, to liberate us from darkness to light, from spiritual death to eternal life.

And here is our joy, here is our hope, here is our confidence, that the everlasting arms are underneath us. And I have to ask you, are they?

Do you know this to be true? Do you know what it is to draw on the strength of God? Have you gone to Jesus and said, Lord, I'm coming to you? Please be my Lord.

He will lift you up. Everything else will let you down. Finally, he will raise you from the dead. And we will always be with the Lord.

It's very good news. That's why we're now going to sing and try to bring these truths deeper into our hearts. We're going to sing and then we're going to pray together as a way of responding to this wonderful truth.

[21 : 07] The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath the everlasting arms. The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath the everlasting arms.