

The Song of Moses

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to chapter 32 in the book of Deuteronomy. We read in verse 9 here, Now as we know, Moses here, we're reading about the Song of Moses.

Moses, as we know, was quite an exceptional person. It tells us, after the death of Moses, that there arose not a prophet like him.

He says that there arose not a prophet since in Israel like him. And in many ways, Moses was a mass of contradictions. And you'll often find that some of the great people are a mass of contradictions.

Because on the one hand, we look at Moses and the testimony that Scripture gives him, that he was the meekest of all men. And we often tend to think of somebody who is very, very meek, as somebody who is, I would say, you'd almost think of being very timid, very shy.

And yet you look at the life of Moses and his leadership is really remarkable. His leadership is as great as the leadership of any other person that we find anywhere.

[1 : 45] We find him as this almost shy, selfie-facing man when God called him. He made every excuse possible. I can't do it. Get my brother. I'm not able.

I'm slow of speech. I can't speak. And yet we find that it is often for what he has written, for his words, for his great authority and leadership that he is so remembered.

There's no doubt whatever that he was a man, although he's turned meek, that he was as tough as leather. And again, when you go through the journeys of Israel, we see that he is really quite a remarkable man, an amazing person.

But I think one of the things that set him apart above all was his, he was like the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. Only one thing really mattered to Moses, and that was the glory of God.

And I think probably the most amazing places where Moses actually, where God was threatening to destroy Israel, he said, I've had enough of them.

[2 : 56] I want to blot them out. Moses said, no, if you're going to blot anybody out, blot me out of the book of life rather than your people. What will the enemies of the Lord say if you don't bring them into the land of promise?

So he's actually saying, blot me out of your book rather than your people, because people will say God wasn't able to do it. It's probably one of the most remarkable prayers that was ever offered in the Bible.

But this is showing us something of the absolute greatness and the meekness and the humbleness of this man in his absolute desire for the glory of God.

So we have here the song of Moses. And again, when you come to reading, Psalm 90 is one of Moses' Psalms.

It tells us that, and they often think that Psalm 91 is his as well, but we're not altogether sure, but people think it's the same author. But you know, Psalm 90 is a quite remarkable psalm, because the end part, of course, is very powerful, and it's asking God to, despite the fact, it's one of the things I love.

[4 : 19] Remember, Israel were going to be wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Moses and the older generation were all going to die in the wilderness because of their constant rebellion, and Moses because of the time he completely lost it, and where he dishonored God publicly before all Israel, and God said to him, because of that you're not going to go into the land of promise.

You'll see it. I'll show it to you. So it seemed so hard for Moses, because this was his great dream, and he prayed and he asked the Lord over and over again that he might.

The Lord said, I don't want to hear any more from you on this. And again, we find Moses' acceptance of that. Again, we see his greatness in that. But in Psalm 90, here's this generation,

with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, who are all going to die in the wilderness. Moses in that Psalm is saying, Lord, let the beauty of the Lord shine upon us. Make us glad all our days. I love that. Here they were, they're going to be wandering round and round and round until they all die.

It would be very easy for Moses to say, oh, well, that's it. No. He's saying, Lord, make us glad. Fill us with joy and gladness. May your beauty shine down upon us.

[5 : 43] So you read the end of Psalm 90 and put it into context and think, here is a man and he knows that he and all this generation are going to die in the wilderness. And yet this is what he's prayed.

But the first part of the Psalm, there's an incredible, almost bleakness, because Moses is facing up to the reality of the death that was facing them every single day.

And it can be quite harsh and quite bleak, but that's one of the wonderful things of the Bible. It's so real. It faces issues. It deals with realities bang on exactly where we are.

So here we have Moses again, and it's, of course, it's inspired by the Lord, but it's here we're called, it's called the Song of Moses. And this song was going to be a testimony against Israel.

There would be times, and the Lord is telling us this, that despite all that God has done for them, they're going to revert back to idolatry.

[6 : 52] They're going to turn their back upon God. Because he says that in verse 20 of chapter 31, for when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give them, and they've grown fat and so on, they will turn to other gods and serve them.

And I find this amazing in verse 21. He's talking about this song. It's in brackets here. He's talking about how this song will confront them as a witness, for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring.

This song is going to be, it's a song that's going to be learnt by them all. It's going to be in, it's going to be in their hands. And then he says, for I know what they are inclined to do even today.

So the Lord, the Lord knows, and it's the same for you and me. You know, we can be sitting in church, and we can be busy thinking about what we're going to do, and we can even be thinking of evil that we're going to do.

We can be thinking of some disobedience that we're going to take part in. God knows. He says, I know. That's exactly what he says. I know what you're inclined to do.

[8 : 03] I know the inclination of your heart. I know what you're thinking. So, we see here just how God knows everything. He's ruling over everything.

So this was a song that Israel were to sing, and particularly at times, special times, particularly at times of renewal, when maybe they had gone off the rails and had come back.

One of the times, of course, this song was sung was when they entered the land of promise, and we find that half of Israel are on Mount Gerasim, and half are on Mount Ebal, and this song was sung. And you often find times in Israel's history where there were times of renewal, where they were kind of getting, trying to get back with God. And you know, there's times like that even in our own lives. We need also times of renewal. Times where we have to maybe rededicate, recommit. It's not that we stop being Christians. If you're a Christian today, you never stop being a Christian.

[9 : 01] Even if you drift, you never stop being a Christian. You cannot be in Christ one day and out of Christ the next day. but we can move away from him, although he will never move away from us, but we can lose the sense of identity, the sense of fellowship, the sense of togetherness, the sense of love, belonging.

We can lose all these kind of things. And that's why it's important every so often. Sometimes the Lord will give us a jolt or he'll do something and we realize, oh, I've drifted.

And it's important for us to rededicate ourselves to the Lord and say, Lord, I need to get back. Here I am. I know I'm a Christian, but it's like when I'm coming at the very first time and I'm saying, Lord, I want all of me to belong to all of you.

Because so often we can give the Lord so much of ourselves, but we like to keep a wee bit to ourself. This bit is mine. The Lord says, no, none of you belongs to you.

And that's one of the things that we find here as you go through this chapter. Particularly we find that in verse 9. But the Lord's portion is his people.

[10 : 22] And so Israel, as we know, had a very, very checkered history. Sometimes it went well and other times they went completely off the rails. But the Lord was giving them this song so that

things, he wanted them to learn from history.

And you know, that's an absolutely essential part of our lives. We're fools if we think we can't learn from history. We mustn't live in the past. Of course not. We're always to live in the present and looking to the future.

But that doesn't mean that we rip up everything that's gone in the past. Because we are to remember from the past. In fact, the Lord tells us that. Verse 7. Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will show you your elders and they will tell you. See, it's madness to forget history.

It's madness not to listen to those who have gone through life and experienced life. It's madness just to say, ah, they're an older generation. They don't count anymore. Of course they count.

[11:26] They've lived life. Yes, things might be different today. It might be a different environment and so on. But you cannot put a price on experience.

God is saying you've got to remember what has gone on in the past. Because the past is part of the present and it will also be part of your future. And it's very, it's such an important part of our understanding.

And so the Lord is saying, or Moses is saying, but the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is his allotted heritage. So in this world that we live in, out of all the nations of this world, there are a group of people that are special to the Lord, just as Israel was special to the Lord.

And unfortunately for Israel, the fact that they were special to the Lord gave them a wrong sense of pride. They sort of puffed their chests out and looked down at other nations.

Which is a very reverse of what God wanted them to do. And it's still the same today with regard to a Christian. It's that we are the Lord's special people.

[12:40] But that should never, ever, ever produce arrogance. It should produce thankfulness and humility within our heart. That God, the God of heaven and earth, would set his love on us, would set us apart for himself.

What an awesome privilege that is. See, there are certain things that God, as it were, takes to himself in a special way in this world.

Everything belongs to him at one level. But there are certain things that he puts a special emphasis upon, like his day. Remember, the seventh day or now what we follow as the Lord's day, the day the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

God created the world in six days. And at the end of that, he rested. And he set that day apart. And he took delight in that day. And he wanted that day special. He said, the other days are yours, but this is mine. And I want people to keep it as a different day.

[13:51] It's a day where we focus upon God. It is a day where we draw aside some other things. And it's one of the things that we've lost as a nation. Because there is so much benefit, not just to our soul, but to our bodies and to our minds, to have a day where there's no pressure to be hustling and bustling and doing everything else.

Where people can relax with a family and just, if we use the word, chill. And yet, spiritually, make it a vibrant day.

And so God has given us this for our bodies, for our minds, for our souls. And we're fools when we turn our back upon it. But God has said, look, God has marked it as a special day.

And he's marked his people as special people. And then he says, the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is his allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land and in a howling waste of the wilderness.

He encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Now, this can be looked at a different way. We can take it literally for Jacob because that's exactly what God did.

[15:07] He found Jacob. Remember when Jacob ran away from home and he was all on his own in the wilderness, in the howling, bleak wilderness.

And God revealed himself in the dream. Remember the dream with the ladder from heaven to earth, the angels ascending and descending and the Lord at the top?

Well, that's where the Lord did. He found Jacob in the desert land in the howling waste of the wilderness. But it was also true of God finding Israel, Jacob's descendants in Egypt because they were also in a desert land in the howling waste of wilderness, not literally but spiritually.

Egypt was a wealthy land but it was a land that was destroying Israel. Spiritually, they were becoming bankrupt.

And they were forgetting their spiritual roots and they had become immersed in the way of Egypt and they had begun to follow the gods of Egypt.

[16:17] How do we know that? Because it tells us that when they came out of Egypt into the wilderness that they were still etched in idolatry and Moses had hardly gone from them for a few days to get the table of the law up the mount.

when they made the golden calf and they were worshipping that. This is a God who brought us out of Egypt. So you see idolatry had become such a part of their lives and so God had to intervene. He had to take them out of the desert land, the spiritual bankrupt land of Egypt because it was destroying them. And so he allowed Pharaoh to turn against Israel because beforehand Israel were the people because of Joseph.

But generations had gone and now this particular Pharaoh had no time for them and his worry was they're going to multiply and grow and become a great nation and a threat to us. What I'm going to do is I'm going to turn them all into slaves.

And part of the great building projects that went on in Israel it was the Israelites who were there. They were the slaves building and working away. And the conditions became so horrendous and Pharaoh became so cruel that Israel became broken and they started to cry out to God.

[17:43] God heard their cry and God intervened and we know the wonderful way that God took them out from Egypt. But of course when they were taken out of Egypt they then went into a wilderness literally into a desert land and into a howling wilderness.

And you know what we find there is he found him in a desert land. He encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. I love this because you know what it shows us?

That God is the one who intervenes. It all begins with God. And we've always got to turn things back. There are no mistakes with God.

Where you were born, the environment you grew up in, the particular, the people you married, the person you married, the family you're part of, the work you have, all these things you say to yourself, you know, God governs everything.

Even the mistakes we make. Because we all make mistakes. We all get things wrong. You know, God is a wonderful way of teaching us through these things and redirecting us.

[18:59] And so we find that God is the one who he found Jacob. He was the one who intervened in Israel. He was the one who was in control. And it's the same with you.

You look back over your life. If you're here today as a Christian, you look back. How did it begin? You know, at the very beginning of your Christian life, you thought it began with you?

No, it didn't. As you go on, you realize it began with him. He is the one who searches us out. That's why Jesus came into the world. Remember what he said?

I have come. Is it to save the lost? Yes, but there's a word before that. That I have come to seek and to save those who are lost.

God's God's mission. He is seeking us out. And remember you have Jesus on many different occasions, but there was in Luke, chapter 15, the parable of the shepherd with the 99 sheep, but the one goes missing.

[20:06] He goes off looking for that sheep. The woman with the coin, looking for that coin until she finds it. the son, the prodigal son and the father looking for him until he returns.

He's highlighting there the initiative begins with him. He is in control. He's the one. And you know, the Lord will chase us. And sometimes we use the expression playing hard to get.

Now that's not how we're actually doing, but you know sometimes spiritually that's exactly how it is. And you can't get over God's patience with us as we have run from one hiding place to another to try to avoid him.

You look back over your life and is it not true? I look back over my life and I spent so long trying to hide from God, particularly when he would get close to me and I felt I really need to submit before his authority but I would still try and find another wee place I could hide for a little longer.

how thankful I am that he didn't give up and say oh well that's it. I'm not going to chase you any longer. You're on your own.

[21:22] But he doesn't. His patience, his long suffering, he keeps after us and after us and after us in different ways. And sometimes he has to break down the props and supports and the other things until we reach a point and a place where we have to submit and say Lord I'm done.

We give in. We give up. And it's because of him. We love him the Bible says why? Because he first loved us because he continues to pursue us and chase us until finally we give in.

And so we find this is what the Lord does and then it tells us he encircled him. And that word encircled us the idea of protecting but also instructing. And so all the time the Lord is at work.

And he was protecting Jacob and he was protecting Israel all the time. And he does the same for you and for me. And you know he has to even protect us from ourselves because sometimes the greatest threat to ourselves is our self.

Sometimes because of who we are, the potential for disaster, the potential for disruption, the potential for disobedience, it's all in there.

[22 : 52] But the Lord who wouldn't give up chasing us is the same Lord who won't give up upholding us and keeping us and encircling us all the time.

time. And so we find that the Lord was leading his people. And he leads his people, he encircles his people, he cares for them primarily by the word but also by his providence, by his rod, by his hand, by his eye in different ways, leading all the time.

And the thing is that you might be here today and you're wondering, is the Lord actually leading me at all? Because you might be in a confused part of life.

Because sometimes life doesn't make sense. And I think we've all been at places where we wonder what's going on. Our dreams are fading and the way we thought things were going to go.

And sometimes we find, do you ever feel that you're just going round in circles? You're not making any headway and you think, I've been here before. Well, Israel in the wilderness were doing that.

[24 : 03] But God was still with them. He was still encircling them. He was still caring for them. He was still leading them. Even although they were going round in circles, they were circles that were led by him.

It's amazing. God is the same in your life and in my life. There's nothing random. There are no mistakes. So God is caring. God is instructing.

God is leading even when things don't make sense to ourselves. And then he says, just finally, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

One of my favorite words in the Bible. Must be your favorite word as well, kept. Kept. You know, sometimes I would hear parents when maybe that a young member of the family began to follow the Lord.

And they would say, oh, it's great, but I'm really worried. What if, you know, they're saying, what if, what if? Well, the Lord who saves is the Lord who keeps.

[25 : 09] He doesn't just say, well, I'm going to give you salvation. You're on your own now. No. He's with every single day. And the good times, the bad times, the times you muck it up, still there.

the times when you're really aware of him being there, obviously, but he's always there. He doesn't, he doesn't give up.

And you are kept, that's what we're told in 1 Peter, that we are kept by the power of God. It's like garrisoned. It's like the Lord has put a garrison around us and we're kept so that every step we will eventually be brought to glory.

couldn't make our way ourselves. In fact, we wouldn't know. Imagine, can you imagine, how do you get to heaven? Somebody said, how do you get to heaven?

How do I get to heaven? In and of ourselves, we have no idea. But that's why we have the Bible, because Jesus says, that's why I came, because I am the way.

[26 : 16] And more than that, when I come into your life, I guarantee to take you there, because you can't make it on your own. You don't know the way. You cannot, you don't have the strength, you don't have the knowledge, you don't have anything that will get you there except by and with me.

That's why Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. And then we see that we are kept, he kept him as the apple.

of his eye. Isn't that beautiful? Surely the eye must be one of the most sensitive, tender things that we have in our physical makeup.

So sensitive. And of course that's why we have so much protection with eyebrows and eyelashes and eyelids and these things keeping, protecting the eye.

eye. Jesus is saying, the Lord is saying to us here, you are kept as the apple of his eye. The most sensitive, the most tender, the most precious thing I have.

[27 : 31] Elsewhere, the Lord says, he that touches you touches the apple of my eye. That's how precious, that's how dear, that's how close you are to the Lord.

And so, as we come to conclude today, if you're somebody who you're able to say, you know, the Lord did find me and it was a howling wilderness and a desert, all I can say is I'm so thankful he found me.

And the amazing thing is he kept me. I'm sure every single one of us will say, if it wasn't for him, I would be long gone because even with his grace, even with his help, as we say, sometimes we muck up, sometimes we drift, but he'll never, ever, ever let us go.

Even when we're not aware of it, our hand is in his hand. Even when we're not aware of his touch, his touch is always on us. The Bible assures us of that.

But if today you're still in that desert, in that howling, wilderness, without him, all I can say is, turn to him today and say, Lord, will you come and find me?

[28 : 51] Because I am kind of lost without you. If you ask him to do that, he will. Because that's why Jesus came. It's his great delight is to save people who are lost.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give you thanks for your word and the encouragement of that word. We have to acknowledge, O Lord, that so often as we look at our own lives, we realize we're not what we want to be, what we should be, but we give thanks that you are working in us. We're not the finished product. God, and that one day you will make us what we will be, and that is where we will resemble the Lord Jesus, where we will be conformed fully into the image of Christ. It's hard for us to understand, but that's how it will be, the image of our Savior. We ask, O Lord, then to bless us. Bless a cup of tea, coffee in the hall, and bless us all, and take us all to our home safely.

May your blessing be upon each and every one. Guide us and keep us and uphold us in everything that we do, forgiving us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Our concluding singing is from Psalm 17, and the Sing Psalms.

[30 : 15] Psalm 17. And we're going to sing from the middle of verse 4 to verse 8.

4 stans as a tune is Carlisle. Middle of verse 4, it's on page 18. From every evil path, by your word, I'm preserved. My feet have held to all your ways, for them I have not sworn.

I call on you, O God, for you will answer me. O turn your ear toward my prayer, and hear my earnest plea. Display your steadfast love, and save with your right hand, all those who flee for against them stand.

In shadow of your wings, hide me in times of strife, and as the apple of your eye, preserve and guard my life. These verses, Psalm 17, from the middle of verse 4 to 8.

From every evil path, I your word, I present, my feet have held to all your wings, from them I have no spare.

[31 : 46] I call on you, O God, for you will answer me, O turn you here towards my grave, and hear my earnest plea.

This way you're set past love, and stay with your right hand, all those who think for help to you, when foes are against them stand, then shadow of your wings, hide me in times of strife, and as the apple of your life, preserve and guard my light.

now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest and abide upon each one of you, now and forever more.

Amen.