

The Fame of the Lord

Deuteronomy 32: 1-15.

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In Deuteronomy 32 we have the publication of Jehovah's name, and in it Moses gives a most comprehensive unfolding of the glory of God. The publication of Jehovah's name is connected with His goodness in coming down to us where we are in all our troubles and need.

Moses calls the heavens to hear, at the opening of his majestic song. It is not the material heavens only, but the intelligent heavens which are called upon to hear something about Jehovah. The great theme is not the people and their failures, but the faithfulness of God: *"My doctrine shall drop down as the rain. My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord."* As in a time of drought, when everything seems burnt up and lifeless, a shower of rain brings life and vigour to the earth, so the publication of Jehovah's name revives His people and makes them like a well-watered garden. The ministry to us of what God is for us through the risen Christ should have this effect upon us, it should refresh us and cheer us amidst all the care and discouragement and distress of these days: *"My doctrine shall drop as rain; my speech shall distil as dew."* Why? Because I am going to speak about God. I have something to tell you about the fame of Jehovah. There is nothing in the universe of God can lift our heads like the knowledge of God. That knowledge enables us to lift our hearts and lift our heads in praise and adoration to that God who delights to unfold Himself to our hearts. So he says, *"I will publish the name of Jehovah."* We are accustomed to speak of name in the sense of greatness or fame. That this is the thought in this passage is evident, for Moses continues: *"Ascribe ye greatness to our God"* — the greatness He has gained for Himself in His mighty acts.

God is not only great in the sphere of power, as is seen in creation, He is morally great also. Not only great in what He has done, but great also in what He is. These are brought together in Psalm 147: *"He telleth the number of the stars: He is strong in power, not one faileth."* But He also bows down to bind up the broken heart. Which is the greater? For a mighty supreme being to send forth the glorious orbs that fill the heavens, or for that same Being to bow down to interest Himself in poor weak things like you and me? It is the greatness of His love and grace that engages Him with those He has created, cares for them in their sorrows and binds up the broken heart.

"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." This reveals His stability, His unchanging goodness. The blessed God carries out His own purposes in spite of men's failure and evil and wickedness. There is no flaw in His ways. All is perfectly right. He uses everything to serve His own purpose. He is supreme over all. He brings out the divine excellency, the righteousness and goodness and love in Himself. When you come to God you come to perfection, reliability — that which cannot shift. You have come to that which you can stake your soul upon for time and eternity. As we are told in the New Testament, *"We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved."* Everything material and shakable will be moved, but Christ is the one in whom there is eternal continuity. To the Son God says, *"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."*

Then he turns aside for a moment to give a picture of the dark background. Israel were a people

taken up by God, to display His moral government, to display His wisdom, grace and mercy. Where could there be a better place for God to come and display Himself than in a world of sin? But we read: *"They have corrupted themselves,"* and that is true of all: *"All we like sheep have gone astray."* There were ninety-nine just worlds, and one world fallen, but after that one world God would go, and He has come to our world. He has come to where we have corrupted ourselves. Israel is but a sample of the whole of mankind. We have corrupted ourselves, but our gracious God has come after us. God the Father has sent His only-begotten Son, who has glorified the Father, and brought a people to Himself who can sing His praises now.

"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

These verses give us the key to prophecy and of God's government of the earth. We must work from that point, Israel being the centre. Otherwise we shall not rightly divide the word of truth. It is important to notice that when God divided the people in Genesis 10, He gave them all their place in relation to a people that had not been born. His grace was set upon Israel before Israel or their great progenitor had yet come into being. When God allotted the nations their position, He allotted it all round His plot of land, which is now trodden under foot by the Gentiles. He kept that for His people. So His ways with the nations had Israel in view, and now His assembly is His chief interest, and there is not a movement going on under heaven now but God will make it turn out for the good of His assembly. In the book of Esther the king could not sleep, and he had the book of the chronicles of Persia brought before him, and the scene was changed. The people of God were in view and the king's sleeplessness is used in the providence of God on His people's behalf. When we come to the birth of Christ, Micah tells the town. It was Bethlehem. There seemed no likelihood of the Babe being born at Bethlehem, but there was a command from the Emperor that all should go up to his own town for the census. It was so arranged in the providence of God, in order to fulfil His word. So it is today. There is not a movement in the world, but God is ruling directly, or overruling indirectly, with a view to the gathering out of His people. There is much spiritual food and comfort in it, when we see in that way the hand of God ruling or overruling all for His people.

Then how sweet is the next verse: *"The Lord's portion is His people."* I do not know how far we enter into it. In the New Testament we are told we have treasure in heaven. We are told, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Ah, but Christ has a treasure here upon earth, and in view of that treasure He sold all that He had, and He laid aside all His Messiah titles and rights, that He might secure that treasure. Christ has a treasure here tonight upon the earth, and we have a treasure up there. *"The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob the lot of His inheritance."* The children of Israel are the people in question in our chapter, but in this present period God is gathering out of this world a people for heaven, He is forming His assembly. You and I belong to it, and it is in connection with that that all the dealings of God are going on at the present moment. "Ye," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "are the salt of the earth." That is, your presence in the world preserves it from total corruption. There is nothing that keeps the earth from becoming wholly a pandemonium but the fact that the church is in it, and the Holy Spirit of God is here in the church. The moment the church is withdrawn, and the Holy Spirit gone at the coming of the Lord for His saints (1 Thess. 4) the earth will become the scene of the devil's unrestrained power (2 Thess. 2). The darkest and most awful time it has ever had in its history will be then.

Let us remember that "the Lord's portion is His people." He loves them with a Father's love. The sense of this love refreshes our hearts. This makes us, in the language of Jeremiah, like a well-watered

garden. God help us to be in the appreciation of it. We are His, and, thank God, He is ours.

"He found him in a desert land, and in a waste, howling wilderness." Where did God find you and me? In the quarry of nature. We were in the gutter, but, thank God, He came to the gutter for us. We were unclean and sinful. Some of us may have been respectable, and others disrespectable, but we were all covered with sin, that thing that nailed the Son of God to the cross. But He sought us and saved us. How great is the grace of our God!

"He led him about, He instructed him; He kept him as the apple of His eye." There is nothing in the human body so guarded as the eye. The eyelid guards it in a wonderful way. When the miner hits the coal with his pick, and the dust flies from it, the lid closes instantly upon that most sensitive member. God kept His people as the apple of His eye. Think of the preciousness of such a statement. It was good for Israel. It is good for you and me.

"As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young; taketh them, beareth them on her feathers." The last thing we do naturally is to turn to God; we prefer to lean upon friends, or circumstances, and all the gracious dealings of our God are to remove from beneath us the human supports, so that we may use the wings of faith and soar into a fuller knowledge of Himself. The eagle carries her young on her back for some distance, and then she drops it, but is instantly beneath it so that it shall not fall. She makes the nest uncomfortable, so that the young bird has to get out of it, and thus the young bird learns to use its wings and begins to fly. The figure teaches entire trust in God. This is intensely real. We are in a pathway where our God intends us to learn to trust in Himself, and all the varied circumstances have this end in view. There is no book like the Bible for simplicity of figure, and this is one of the finest drawn from nature.

"The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Does the Lord alone lead you and me? In all our life, is the Lord alone before our eyes?" There was no strange god with him." Do not let us allow anything between God and our souls. This glorious God, whose name and fame the Spirit of God is bringing before us, has come to where we were, that He might bring us to where He is. He guards us like the apple of His eye.

"He made him to ride on the high places of the earth." Where are your high places and mine? They are not on the earth, but, blessed be God, He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1) Israel rode on the high places of the earth. Read those beautiful prophecies of Balaam, who, though a wicked prophet, was made by God to utter His thoughts about Israel, and see the power and favour and beauty of the people of God as under His eye (Num. 23: 24).

"He made him to taste honey out of the rock." Everything that brings God before the soul is the honey. David says, speaking of God's thoughts, that they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, and more to be desired than fine gold. Is there anything in man's literature like this? It brings food from God in the power of the Holy Ghost to our souls. If we get where Ephesians 1 puts us, if we get into communion with God, into the joy of God's precious thoughts, we know something of what it is to suck the honey out of the rock.

"Then Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." What a response to God for all God's very best! Let me ask, "Has the church done better?" It has remained for the church dispensation, the day in which we live, to perpetrate the darkest deeds that were ever done on God's earth, deeds which must have made the very angels weep. We need to be kept lowly and to remember that all our blessing is the fruit of grace. Let us remember a verse in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Thou shalt remember the pit from which thou wert digged." Let us remember that the man who wrote Ephesians, which gives the highest truth in all of Paul's epistles, wrote afterwards that he was the chief of sinners. While climbing up the heights of

God's everlasting purposes and counsels in grace, in which He displays Himself, let us never forget what we were, and where God's grace found us. So shall we be kept from vaunting ourselves and ever sensible of the exceeding grace of God to whom all the glory must be.