

The Danger Point

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The song of Moses (Deut. 32 and Rev. 15: 3) is a wonderful summary of God's ways with Israel. It gives the sovereign call of that nation on God's part, their perverseness, their subjugation by enemies in consequence, and their dispersion; the ultimate overthrow of those enemies, and the recovery of both land and people through sovereign mercy, to enjoy with the spared nations the favour of Jehovah.

But to every Spirit-taught heart the song of the Lamb (Rev. 15: 3) has to be added to the song of Moses to make the fulfilment of the latter righteously possible.

"The river of God's grace,
Through righteousness supplied,
Is flowing o'er the barren place
Where Jesus died."

It is in the song of Moses, and after the introductory paragraph indicative of the purpose of God for them (vv 1-14), that we have the words, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." This verse indicates the danger point in a soul's history, or in the history of God's people; the point whence radiates every feature of departure and disaster among saints.

The meaning of Jeshurun is not perhaps definitely obtainable. It appears to lie between "upright ones," and "beloved of Jehovah." We start thus with God's thoughts of His people, the beloved of His heart, qualified to be here on earth in uprightness in full consistency with their calling. Every true believer in Christ is not only redeemed from all condemnation and secured for ultimate glory, but is set up with a new life and nature, the work of God's holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit Himself indwelling, to enable him to be consistent with all that God teaches him concerning Christ.

"But" — begins our verse, — "but Jeshurun waxed fat." Evidently God had not failed Israel as to abundance of supply. Verses 13 and 14 give a picture of the land of blessing and of its resources, a perfect Elysium of delight and food. Even its very rocks — usually (apart from God's blessing) the most unyielding of substances — seemed to roll out honey and oil; while increase of the fields, butter of kine, milk of sheep, rams of Bashan, goats, fat of kidneys of wheat, the pure blood of the grape, all told of the wealth of God's provision for them.

"But Jeshurun *waxed fat*." How easy it is, and yet how perilous; the very wealth of favour which God has provided for all Christians, and of which all may so freely partake, to become perverted in our enjoyment of it, so that it ministers to our self-aggrandisement and self-importance. Unto us is this land given in possession" say these advanced ones of themselves (Ezek. 11: 15), while saying to others not so advanced "Get you far from the Lord." You have no part with us, they seem to say. To US has God given all this ministry of His bounty, not to you. It is the point of danger, to go on eating and feeding and indulging appetite, most appreciative of good food and rich provision, but making it minister to our own self-importance. Perhaps one of the greatest tests of grace is to be greatly privileged and yet to be lowly in mind and patient with others.

The verse proceeds, "*and kicked*." This is an early, if not the earliest, sign of departure. Instead of lowliness, and meekness, forbearing one another in love; instead of quiet submission to and

acquiescence in the will and way of the Lord, there is the substitution of a will and way of our own. There is impatience of spirit, a determination by hook or by crook to get rid of what resists our idea of things, a resistance to authority or correction, as well as a fretful impatience that will not wait for the direction and handling of the Lord. As we accentuate our self-importance, there is an increasing desire to make things yield to *our* will, and we do not like to be pulled up and corrected; we kick against truth that clashes with our accepted notions, or that tends to damp our pride and upset our self-complacency. We believe that our brethren ought without question to accept *our* version, and bow to *our* application of things. Our "liberty" we think consists in our overriding all that lifts itself up against US.

Lack of exercise contributes to the accumulation of fat, but the only safe exercise for Christians lies within the limit of the will of God. When the exercise is the doing of our own will, and insistence on our own way, it is the precursor of open departure and the portent of disaster. Hence "*he forsook God that made him.*" There are different circles of authority which the Christian is called upon to recognise. He is set as a child under parents. He is as a subject before powers that be. He is, if a young believer, to be submissive to those whom Scripture would honour as elders in the faith, who are examples to the flock and teach the behaviour that is proper to the house of God. But above all, the highest privilege is to give GOD His place. The fear of God, the trembling at His word, is the most urgent of all forms of submission and subjection. Concentration upon self, or upon ourselves, is certain to be accompanied by increasing moral distance from God. There is claim to liberty — often under specious pleas — always a kind of liberty that permits of our choosing when and how we serve; less and less regard to the whole economy of God's will. In point of fact no-one has less liberty for the exercise of his own will or predilections, than the Lord's servant. He is the Lord's, body and soul.

"I have not sent these prophets," (Jer. 23: 21) had to be said of those who professed to serve Him, "yet they ran." Much activity, yet not sent there by the Lord, whose will should have contented them. Thus while professing to be His servants, they did their own will, dreamed their own dreams, chose their own messages, and in truth "forsook God which made" them. Where a servant *ceases* to be consistent under any plea with the truth the Lord has made known unto him, he has ceased to be practically one of the "upright ones", he has so far forsaken the God that made him. Made him for what? Surely to be the instrument of His will, the vessel of His pleasure, the witness to His Name (Deut. 32: 3, 4).

Our verse adds, "*and highly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*" Where there is a diminishing sense of obligation to be held by the reins of God's sovereign will and pleasure, there is lessened the desire for salvation from the present order of things. There is more and more disposition to accredit the movements by which men propose to accelerate the work of God. There are efforts which appear most commendable in the judgment of many Christians, efforts that group saints together for evangelistic and other purposes, into which are easily drawn the young and eager spirits, who tire of conflict and controversy, and long — sometimes with very commendable motives — to "get on with the work." There are pilgrims and crusaders, there are evangelical unions, missions, and circles of many kinds, all of which we may conclude are to draw out the best in a Christian, and are calculated to provide channels for the activities in which he would devotedly engage. But, however outwardly commendable by our minds, the reader must forgive me if I express the conviction that the form of these movements lays them open to the saddening charge, they "lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation."

Do we really esteem that we can wisely add by these moulds and movements to the provision GOD has made for the conduct of His testimony and service? Have we discovered in truth that it is a wise policy to paint the rose to make it the more beautiful? or to add our concoctions to God's prescriptions for His assembly and for His service, to make them more successful?

To do so must surely imply that we lightly esteem the wonderful adequate, all-sufficient and effectual instructions of the all-wise God. He is the Rock of our salvation, from whom flows blessed, perfect grace and supply for every need; stable, solid, real, for the youngest, most eager and active, as well as for the most mature, of the saints of God. People who do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God, may unwisely create these movements to supplement God's instructions for us; but is it not in result an impeachment of God's wisdom, and a challenge to all that He teaches us of the All-sufficiency of Christ, and the power of His Holy Spirit.

The song of Moses pursues the early departures of Israel to their bitter end, and then shows how the abounding of God's mercy will secure their blessing and His own glory. But it is well for us to ask ourselves, Are we set on doing our own will, or the will of God as expressed in Christ, and recorded in His word? While delighting in all the amazing tokens of God's sovereign love and favour, are we also humbly seeking to be among His "upright ones" who are restfully content with His wise will, and as broken in under His discipline desirous of being consistent with all He has taught us? May we answer the questions to our God.