

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker  
Pastor, Swift Creek Baptist Church (SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com)  
18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
Sunday, February 9, 2020

## Deuteronomy 32:44-47 “The Bible: Your Life and Well-Being”

Intro. My message today is an important foundational message for your life and spiritual well-being. As we see in v.47 Moses certainly believed that the Word of God that he shared was of vital importance. I hope you will agree.

I want to share the important context of this text of Scripture. In the first part of chapter 32 we have the words of the song of Moses, or shall we say the song that God gave to Moses for the people of Israel (cf. 31:14-21). It was to be somewhat like their national anthem that they would sing with regularity. Every Israelite was to learn it and teach it to their children. The impact of this song was evident from the fact that it was quoted or referred to in Psalms 115 and 135; Isaiah 44, and Ezekiel 16. The apostle Paul quotes from it in Romans 15:10, and refers to portions of it in Romans 9-11. Yet I dare say that few Christians could tell you what the song of Moses is about. More of us have heard about the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 than the Song of Moses in Deut. 32.

Modern translations help the reader know when the biblical content is narrative or a song or poetry by using a different format. Do you see the difference in your translation between our text of Scripture and the song that precedes it? Hebrew poetry uses parallelism, which is very evident in vv.2-3.

I want to give a brief summary of this song of Moses. This song was intended to keep God’s people from the worship of false gods, and if they failed, to call them back to the true God during times of judgment. Unfortunately, the people failed to allow this song to achieve this purpose for the most part. I trust it had a part in their return to God during and after experiences of God’s judgment.

Note especially the worldwide doxology of this song. V.43 says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.” The song begins with praise to God and ends with a call to the nations to join His people in praise to God for demonstrating His righteous judgment. Indeed, near the end of the Great Tribulation we read in Rev. 15:3-4, “They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.’”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, we see that the nations will praise God for providing atonement, which He did through the sacrifice of his Son Jesus. Thus, the song of Moses will give way to “the song of the Lamb.” Judgment will not have the last word.

While I could preach a sermon on the content of the song of Moses, what follows the song is an important text of Scripture regarding the role of the Word of God in our lives and how we are to respond to it. First of all, I want you to understand:

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Rev. 6:10; 18:20; 19:2.

## I. THE VITAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD'S WORD

Regarding the “words of this law,” probably a reference to the book of Deuteronomy, Moses says in v.47, “For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.” Notice what he says here:

A. These Are Not Empty Words - Again, Moses says in v.47, “For it is not a futile thing for you...” The word translated “futile” literally means “empty.” In Isa. 29:8 the word is used of a hungry man who dreams of eating only to wake up and find that his stomach is still empty. What a disappointment! Folks, the Word of God is not empty and void of truth, power, or significance. It is not an empty dream, a myth or the opinion of men but the Word of God. It is not worthless, trivial or frivolous. It is no light and trifling matter, but a great importance and consequence. It is not a matter of indifference but of absolute necessity. Moses clearly was exhorting the people to treat these words of God with all seriousness and gravity. The Word of God deals with weighty issues, like God, the consequences of sin, how to please God, and how to have eternal life.

Yet what some preachers give their congregation is like a Twinkie, which is hardly more than empty calories, void of nutrition. In 2 Peter 2:17 Peter said of false prophets, “These are wells without water...” Likewise, Jude 1:12 calls them “clouds without water...” How foolish to substitute popular opinion for the Word of God!

So don't regard the Word of God as insignificant or as something you can freely ignore.

Moses also shares why the Word of God is not empty and vain but of vital importance. It is because:

B. These Are Life-Giving Words - Moses says in v.47, “For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life...” Likewise, look back at Deut. 30:19, where Moses said, “... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” That makes the word of God very significant, doesn't it? It is a matter of life and death. Lev. 18:5 says, “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.” Moses had already said in Dt. 8:3, “...that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” That Scripture is so significant it was quoted by Jesus Himself. Pointing back to this very truth, Jesus said to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:17, “But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Suppose your child becomes sick with a deadly illness. You take your child to the doctor who does an examination and runs tests. He gives the diagnosis of a deadly disease. When he offers a cure, would you treat his words as a trifling matter? Would you ignore what he had to say? Of course not! His words relate to life and death.

I must add a New Testament perspective here. Unfortunately, obedience to the law of Moses cannot give life because of our inability to keep the law (Rom. 8:3). As it turns out, the Law of God could not give life. The true purpose of the law was to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7) not remove sin. It was given to show our need for a Savior. Rom. 10:5-6 says, “For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way...” Then he says in vv.9-10, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” So the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ are

a great consequence. Believe the gospel and you have life everlasting. Reject and ignore the gospel and you will face eternal death. How I wish that all who heard me today would be fully persuaded of this!

There is another reason why God's Word is of vital significance. It is because:

C. God's Word Promotes Your Well-Being - Then Moses says in the last of v.47, "by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess." There are two ways to interpret that promise. First, the fact that God would "prolong your days" can refer to living a longer life than you would otherwise. However, it also had an application to the nation itself. There were several warnings in Deuteronomy that turning from God would result in expulsion from the land. On the other hand, remaining faithful to God would result in prolonging the time when the nation would remain in the land. This promise is similar to what he already said in Deut. 4:40, "You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time." There we see that obedience to God's Word not only results in a longer life but also a better life. He says, "that it may go well with you..." This is similar to what he said back in 6:24, "And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always..." Years later God said in Isaiah 1:19-20, "If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword..." Prov. 3:1-2 says, "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you." Both a long life and a better life were promised. Obedience to the Word of God will improve your marriage, and overall make you a better person. 1 Tim. 4:8 says, "... godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

So what is your own attitude toward the Word of God? Do you see it as the instrument of life instead of death and well-being instead of turmoil? I hope you see how vitally important the Word of God is in your life.

Yet the Word of God will do you no good if it is only on the shelf of your home, or even if it is merely in your hand. Instead, I want you to see from our text several requirements for benefiting from God's Word. First, you must:

## II. INTERNALIZE GOD'S WORD

It is not enough just to hear or read God's Word. We must also internalize God's Word. James 1:21 says that we are to "... receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." So we should internalize God's Word in the following ways:

A. With Thoughtful Reflection - Moses says in v.46, "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today..." The phrase "Set your hearts" is a literal translation. It can also be translated, "take to heart." It is a strong command. The command to set or lay God's Word upon our hearts is found elsewhere. For example, in Dt. 11:18 Moses said, "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul..." That phrase is used by the prophet Haggai 4 times and each time it is simply translated, "consider" in the NKJV, or something like "Think carefully" in the HCSB.

I think we see an illustration of this back in v.2. There we see that we are to soak in God's Word like rain. Just as the earth receives the life-giving rain, even so we are to receive the Word of God.

The point is we are to see to it that God's Word is received into our hearts. So we are to reflect upon God's Word and seek to understand its true meaning. Then we are to retain God's Word in our memories. We are thus to avoid the very problem identified in v.18, "Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you." The Word of God should make a deep and lasting impression upon us.

Tuesday we had the funeral for deacon Jim Hatfield. I pointed out that as Jim received his cancer diagnosis I heard him quote relevant Scriptures several times when I visited him. He was one who had obeyed this command to internalize the Word of God. As a result, he lived a blessed life and then entered into eternal life in heaven.

The context gives another way we can internalize the Word of God:

B. By Means of a Song - We see an example of this right here in chapter 32. Putting God's Word in a song is a memory device. Look back at 31:19, "Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel." The fact that the song would be a witness for generations to come indicated the enduring nature of the song, long after the death of Moses. In fact, look at v.21, "Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants...." Because they would be able to remember the song, it would answer the questions of unbelief, explain the suffering of God's people, and give assurance of hope in God. This song was to be sung when the people assembled for worship, especially at the Feast of Tabernacles (31:10).

You are probably aware of the fact that elderly people with memory problems can still sing songs they learn when they were young. You may not be able to remember many Scriptures, but you are likely to be able to remember many of the biblical songs that you have learned since childhood.

This is one reason why music and singing is so important in the life of the church and in the lives of believers. Haven't you sung a song in church and then continued to sing that song in your mind for several days afterwards? The truth of God's Word set to music is an excellent way to internalize God's Word. That is why it is so very important that our worship songs present sound doctrine about God, salvation, and Christian living.

Yet even internalizing God's Word is not enough to be impacted by it. We must take the next step. We should:

### III. OBEY AND APPLY GOD'S WORD

Moses says in the last of v.46 that they and their children were "to be careful to observe — all the words of this law." The word translated "observe" (*asah*) simply means "to do." As the old Nike commercial says, "Just do it." James 1:22 says, "Be doers of the Word and not hearers only." Don't be deceived into thinking that just hearing the Word of God is enough. Too many of us hear without heeding, read without responding, and profess without practicing. I am not up here just to impart information. I am here to assist in your moral and spiritual transformation!

Last night I was helping Cheryl make our bed. Recently she put the quilt that her grandmother made on our bed. It is over 35 years old. I noticed that some of the stitching was coming loose in one of the squares and I mentioned it to Cheryl. She said that her grandmother would be glad that we were using the quilt. She said too many people had taken her quilts and just put them away for safekeeping. She said she didn't make the quilts to be stored away but to be used.

Even so, God did not give us the Bible so we could just store it away. He gave it that we might use it for our good. So see to it that you act upon God's Word with faith and obedience. As someone has said, "The devil doesn't care if you go to church or read your Bible as long as you do not apply it to your life."

Finally, for us and others to benefit from the blessings of God's Word we must also:

#### IV. TRANSMIT GOD'S WORD

I see two examples of this important truth in our text today. First of all, leaders are to transmit God's Word:

A. To the Congregation - We see this reflected in v.44, "So Moses came with Joshua<sup>2</sup> the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people." Some believe that Moses divided the congregation so that they could hear better. Some heard the song from the lips of Moses, and the other half of the congregation heard it from Joshua. It is significant that both stood before the people to deliver this song. The leadership of Moses was about to end and Joshua was about to become their new leader. This act showed that they were of the same mind, and there would be continuity in leadership. The leader of the old generation was passing on the Word of God to a new generation (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). Leaders will change but the message should not change. Each generation is to be faithful to the Word of God. Jude 1:3 says that each generation is to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

We see another example of this back in 31:11-13. I had a deacon in my previous church that frequently quoted this passage of Scripture, "When all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

So let us bring our families and gather on a regular basis to hear the Word of God. We should invite the "stranger" who lives among us as well. The more people that gather to hear the Word of God the greater the impact by the Word of God.

B. To Your Children - Moses says in the last of v.46, "you shall command your children to be careful to observe — all the words of this law." Over and over again the people of Israel were reminded that the faith and commitment of any one generation were not sufficient for all the generations to come. Likewise, Moses had already said back in Deut. 6:7, "You shall teach

---

<sup>2</sup> This is literally "Hoshea" in the Hebrew text, the name that means "salvation." Yet the fact that he was "the son of Nun" clearly shows this is Joshua, whose name means "the Lord saves."

them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”<sup>3</sup>

Even so, we must teach our children and grandchildren the gospel and all of God’s Word, and then they must personally believe it, receive it, and act upon it. Our responsibility is to teach God’s Word by word and example. It is your children’s responsibility to believe and act upon it. It is a decision that cannot be forced upon them. They must make it for themselves. I’m afraid there are going to be a lot of parents who are going to be held accountable to God for why they did not bring their children to church to hear God’s Word on a regular basis.

Conclusion: So let us understand the vital significance of the Word of God. Let us see to it that we internalize the Word of God. Let us be doers of the Word. And finally, let us faithfully transmit His wonderful truths to others. I seek to do my part to prepare and preach solid biblical messages each Sunday. Are you doing your part to come and hear, as well as invite others?

Sources: Donald F. Ackland, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1964); Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hgts, VA: Published by Author), 2019; Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (accessed from *Online Bible*, 1706-1721); C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 reprint); John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament* (accessed from *Online Bible*, 1760; J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1981); Eugene H. Merrill, *New American Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); H. D. M. Spence & Joseph S. Exell, ed., *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

#### ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

© Dr. Stephen Felker. These notes may be used and even shared for personal study or ministry, but not for commercial purposes. The author credits the sources listed above and footnotes for much of the content. The “live” recording of this sermon will be more completely in the author’s own words. To obtain an audio recording of this message, you may listen free at [www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker](http://www.sermonaudio.com/pastorFelker). Videos of a number of Dr. Felker’s sermons are available at [www.swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com/resources/videos](http://www.swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com/resources/videos). Dr. Felker’s email address is [S+Felker&2@aol.com](mailto:S+Felker&2@aol.com) (remove signs).

---

<sup>3</sup> This command was repeated in 11:19.