

Deuteronomy 32:9 ESV But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. **10** "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. **11** Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,**12** the Lord alone guided him, no foreign god was with him. **13** He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field, and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. **14** Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs, rams of Bashan and goats, with the very finest of the wheat—and you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape. **15** "But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. **16** They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. **17** They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. **18** You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

I. The passage we read comes from the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. It recounted in poetry God's dealing with Israel during 40 years in the desert.

A. The song was written under the direct inspiration of God and was to serve as a warning. God had said in chapter 31: **Deuteronomy 31:19 ESV** "Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. **20** For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.

1. It described a cycle that was often repeated in the lives of the Jews. God was pointing out that the blessing he bestows is often followed by our forgetfulness, wandering, idolatry and unfaithfulness.

2. In the song, Moses sings of God's tender love and consistent provision.

a) God claims Israel as his own portion, calling them his "allotted heritage".

b) He describes how he found them in the desert of Egypt; oppressed, enslaved, abused. But there he encircled them protectively and caring for them like his own children. They became the "apple of his eye".

c) He describes himself as a mother eagle, tenderly caring for her young, padding the nest and sheltering with her wings. He guided his people, with no need of help from any of the so-called Gods of Egypt or Canaan.

d) He fed them bountifully with crops and honey, oil, curds and milk and a plentiful supply of meat and wine - everything they could possibly need.

B. The danger in God's inspiration of the song, and the song itself is when Israel grew fat. "**But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.**"

1. Jeshurun is a poetic name for Israel, used only 4 times in the Bible, 3 times in Deuteronomy, once in Isaiah. It roughly translates into "upright" or "just".

2. It can be taken here as an indictment from God of his backsliding people. Those who should be known for their uprightness, are not acting righteously.

a) The KJV says Jeshurun "grew thick". This conjures up images of a hippopotamus, whose skin is 2 inches thick, to protect it from attacks.

b) Israel had become impervious to the convicting power of God's covenant with them, imagining they had earned their blessed estate on their own.

- C. They were a people, blessed like no other in the world, who in spite of their blessing, have become hard-hearted. They can not be penetrated by the love and kindness of the God that had rescued them from their slavery in Egypt.
1. The Bible says that “**Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked**”. Imagine an unbroken horse that doesn’t want to be saddled. Israel was resisting submitting to God, and enjoying his fellowship, though he had only brought them blessing.
 2. The verse describes exactly what that rebellion looked like in practice. “**he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.**”
 - a) To forsake something is to give up on it, or turn away from it. Israel had abandoned God and put their trust in themselves; and worse, in the idols that the nations that God was evicting before them had trusted in.
 - b) Scoffing takes it one step further. This means that they were holding God in utter contempt. They were mocking the very Rock of their salvation.
- D. “**They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.**” They committed adultery with other gods, offering sacrifices to demons masquerading as gods that had given no benefit, instead of to the God who had been a Father, protector, provider for them for 40 years.
1. The passage indicates they had a craving for something new. The Holy One who had parted the Red Sea, sent food from the sky, caused water to flow from a rock, and sheltered them with a cloud by day and a fire by night just wasn’t doing the trick for them anymore. They would not be satisfied by him.
 2. “**You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.**” Though God had been a flawless Father to them, they pushed him out of their thoughts, until he was gone from their memories.
- II. A little over 3 years ago, by the grace of God. I was able to repent of an addiction I had for my entire life. The addiction was to food. I was constantly eating until I tipped the scales at over 315 pounds. I had no power over this problem until the Lord granted me repentance from the sin that was killing me.
- A. I remember late during this time in my life, I had been working in my yard and I suddenly felt very strange and uncomfortable. I thought I was getting sick. But you may not believe me when I tell you what the problem was. I was hungry.
1. I literally could not recognize genuine hunger because I ate constantly, whether I was hungry or not. So on this rare occasion when my body needed food, I didn’t understand the signal. I thought something was really wrong!
 2. Don’t misunderstand. I had feelings I **thought** were hunger, but they were just cravings. “I want something sweet, salty, greasy, etc.” But this was never genuine, healthy hunger. Just soothing a desire, or eating stress away.
- B. I believe this describes the Christianity many of us experience regularly. We are bombarded by so many material things, sexual enticements, personal ambitions, and pursuits of glory, that we mistake these things for real nourishment, and neglect the very thing that would truly satisfy us.
1. **Jeremiah 2:12 ESV** Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, **13** for my people have committed two evils:

- they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.
2. My question to you is this, how long has it been since you had a genuine hunger and thirst for the Lord? We can mistake many things for true hunger.
 - a) We mistake a polished worship experience in a climate-controlled, well lit building for spiritual hunger. But that can just be emotional manipulation.
 - b) But the Bible says, **Psalm 63:1 ESV** O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. There is no mention of seeking God in a perfect environment, but in a harsh one, where he is the only hope.
- III. 2 Things are necessary for those who would receive sustenance from God. You must restore hunger, and you must know where to find food.
- A. **Isaiah 55:1 ESV** “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. **2** Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”
 1. God’s offer of grace is freely made to those who will earnestly ask. Jesus said to the woman at the well, ““If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”
 2. But like the Israelites, so many of us have removed ourselves so far from the sustaining life of God, that we’ve forgotten the gift of God. We’ve forgotten who it is that speaks to us through his promises, we have not asked him!
 - B. We must restore hunger by putting aside worldly cravings and pursuits, and returning to Jesus in humility and repentance. Food for our souls is only found in the person of Jesus, not in wealth, power or prestige. Only Jesus delivers. Everything else is empty calories that only make us fat and falsely satisfied.
 1. **John 6:35 ESV** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” What a promise! Never hunger! Never Thirst! Many of us don’t believe that, and our schedules and our bank accounts loudly proclaim the fact. We spend our time, our money, our energy and our labor on that which can never satisfy.
 2. Why do you think Jesus told the rich ruler to “sell everything and come follow me”. Jesus was making him the best deal ever, but he was fat like Jeshurun! He had filled up on the empty calories of morals and wealth, and couldn’t possibly come to the table where Jesus had made a place for him.
 - C. Once we have come humbly to Jesus, where do we find food for our souls?
 1. In God’s word. Let me be very clear. Without God’s word, your spirit will starve. After an actual 40-day fast in a burning desert, Christ quoted Deuteronomy to the devil, telling him, **Matthew 4:4 ESV** “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

2. The importance of reading, understanding, memorizing, and obeying God's Word cannot be overstated. A Christian who doesn't read God's Word is like a heart patient who won't get better, because he won't take his pills.
 - a) God's Word is hard to understand in places, and it takes work. But everything that is worth anything in life is hard. It was easy for me to get fat. It's been at times really hard to get well, and take care of myself.
 - b) But don't miss the fact that the word is not only hard, but it is sweet. Nothing is superior than when a promise from God takes root in you!
 3. John described Jesus as "the Word". The very best thing God ever had to say. If you go looking for life strategies or moral legislation in God's Word you'll come away burdened and dry; but if you look for Jesus on every page, you will find the Way, the Truth and the Life you long for.
- D. Next we find food for our souls in prayer. Using food imagery, Jesus said, **Luke 11:9 ESV** "And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; **12** or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
1. The Father longs to satisfy you with good things, but with nothing so good as himself. If you are waning in your hunger for God, ask yourself what it is that you are consuming. Set it aside and ask God to help you to grow in your hunger for him. Tell him to point you to where the life-giving food is.
 2. Make Psalm 42 your prayer. Pray it until it's true! **Psalm 42:1 ESV** As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. **2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?
 - a) Let your soul long to appear before God, instead of just thinking you've got an audience or are feasting on him because you come to church!
 - b) I pray your hunger increases because I know you'll be satisfied!
- IV. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- V. **Benediction:** 2 Peter 3:18 ESV (May you) grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.