

Deuteronomy Chapter 9:18-20

- Some time ago I read a book by A.W. Tozier entitled “The Knowledge Of The Holy”, in it Tozier examines the character and attributes of God.
- As I study my Bible inductively, searching things out, trying to be inquisitive one of the things I look for are clues or indicators of God’s character and personality – and God’s word doesn’t disappoint on this score because it’s all about Him.

The Psalmist declares:

Psalm 40:7 “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.”

- It is a great study, and over the years as I’ve compiled my own list of attributes that have helped me to form my own understanding of God’s character.
- I just discovered another attribute a couple of weeks ago reading through Isaiah so I’ve added it to my list.
- It is important to have a correct understanding of God’s character and personality because that understanding or perspective will influence our understanding of God’s word.
- Our passage this morning is a good example of that: I don’t want to come off as snooty or arrogant, but the unbeliever or possibly the new believer, or the novice in the faith might look at this passage before us and mistakenly conclude that God is some kind of a hot head just waiting to come down hard on his people, itching to drop the hammer and bring judgment, and that Moses being a little more reasonable, of a calmer and more collected disposition intervenes and changes God’s mind and course of action.
- This would be an incorrect understanding of the passage, and an incorrect understanding of God’s character.

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- One of the characteristics that would help us to better understand this passage is the “immutability of God” – He is immutable – simply put He doesn’t change.

Malachi 3:6 “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Hebrews 6:17-18 “¹⁷Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: ¹⁸That by two immutable things, in which is was impossible for God to lie, we might have a

strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

- What are those two things? ¹God doesn't change and ²God doesn't lie.
 - He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
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- Applying this understanding of God's character to the passage before us, knowing that God doesn't change; this means He didn't change His mind or His course of action, Moses didn't convince God or get Him to change His mind.
- Something else must have changed and or there was some other purpose served here.
- Moses came down from the mount after having received the Commandments of God, seeing the people worshipping a false god of their own making, having broken the Commandments of God before they could actually receive them – he concluded what should rightly take place just as the Apostle Paul declares.

Romans 6:23 “The wages of sin is death...”

- Moses' next step as we read in **V: 18** “*I fell down before the Lord...*” Moses humbled himself before the Lord.

Psalms 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

- When Moses fell down before God; he was broken before God, heart sick over the sin of the people. Where else could he turn?

I like the way Peter put it:

John 6:68 “... Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the word of eternal life.”

- Then for forty day and forty nights Moses interceded on behalf of the children of Israel, not eating bread, not drinking water.
- 40 is the number of judgment and testing. In Genesis it rained for 40 days and for 40 nights. In Numbers they wandered for 40 years.

Moses is doing what Paul described:

Galatians 5:16 “This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

- Moses has humbled himself before God, he's asking God, begging God – prayer – and he's denying the lust of the flesh, his body assuredly wants food and water – which it is being denied: the flesh is growing weaker, the spirit is growing stronger.

- Fasting & prayer is a powerful combination and it comes recommended by Jesus.
- When Jesus' disciples had trouble casting out a demon Jesus told them:

Mark 9:29 "... this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

- This powerful tool isn't being used to change God, it's being used to change Moses – the heart of Moses is what is changing in this scenario.

Deuteronomy is a summary of the events, Exodus gives us a few more details:

Exodus 32:31-32 ³¹And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. ³²Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin - ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (He's talking about the Lamb's book of life.)

- Moses knows that God is Holy, He is Righteous, and just – and that there is a price to be paid for sin, and Moses is willing to pay that price for them, he is willing to die for the people.

Exodus 32:33 "And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book."

- 3,000 men died that day at the hands of the Levites, that is a whole other story.
- God used all these circumstances to bring Moses to the place of crying out to God for mercy, for forgiveness on behalf of the people.
- God was putting in Moses' heart an intense love for the children of Israel, He was making Moses a true shepherd of God's people.

Psalms 106:19-23 ¹⁹They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. ²⁰Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. ²¹They forgot God their savior, which had done great things in Egypt; ²²Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea. ²³Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest he should destroy them."

- God makes Moses an intercessor to stand in the breach. Without knowing it Moses was following Jesus:

Mark 8:34 "... whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

- Moses had denied himself, fasting 40 days & 40 nights, crying out to God – taking up the cross, willing to die for his flock – just like Jesus.

V: 19 “For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you.”

- Moses wasn’t afraid for himself, he was concerned for the flock.

V: 19b “But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also.”

- God listened – not as much to the words, but to the change in Moses’ heart for the people.

1 Samuel 16:7 “But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

Psalm 34:15 “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.”

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- To me it is interesting that Moses was not called to give his life for the children of Israel, those that sinned against God did in fact perish because of their sin – Moses wasn’t called to or even capable of dying for their sins.
 - Moses was a great man, but he was only a man and the only sin he could die for were his own.
 - Moses was a foreshadowing or a type of Jesus – but those models always break down at some point.

Jesus said:

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

Romans 5:19 “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

Speaking of Jesus:

Philippians 2:7-8 “⁷... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”