

PRAYER AS PRAISE
Exodus 15:1-21

Intro: Last week I spoke on Prayer As Worship; this week, on Prayer As Praise.

In some senses these two cannot be distinguished from each other. We worship when we praise, and we praise when we worship.

But in order to bring out an important distinction in this type of praying let us continue to think of worship as having to do with God Himself as a Person, whereas praise, or thanksgiving, has to do with what God does.

My object is not only to bring a message, but to illustrate a method: turning the Word into prayer.

This is not taking liberties with the Word. Quite to the contrary, it is making the Word most personal and practical.

And, as I sought to bring out last week, I do not need to limit myself to those passages of Scripture which are prayers. Any part of the Word which has any practical significance at all for me should, at some time or other, become the subject of prayer.

The passage I have read tonight is not strictly a prayer; it is a song. And yet it actually is a prayer expressed in song (as so much of our singing is, or should be).

In fact, Exodus 15 contains the first psalm of Scripture.

A reading of the psalm will show that it has one main theme from beginning to end: PRAISE!

Let us consider it together thinking of what it can teach us about how we can praise the Lord.

I. The REASON for the praise.

Almost everything we do has some reason behind it. Whether or not that reason has been carefully thought out is another thing, but there usually is a reason behind the things we do.

In spiritual matters it is most important to understand the reasons behind what we as the people of God are to do.

If we do not understand, then we do things just because we are supposed to and the result is a deadly formalism. Ultimately, because we do not understand the reason behind it, we stop doing it altogether.

III. The person who came to me expressing such joy in learning the reason why we observe the Lord's Supper.

Why, at this point in Israel's history, did they so gladly join with Moses in singing praises to the Lord?

The answer is very easy to find. Look at Ex. 14:31.

God had miraculously delivered the children of Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and they saw the evidence and recognized that this was what God had done. Therefore, they began to praise Him, to thank Him for what HE had done!

Now, listen carefully. The only way you can be excused from praising God is if God has not done anything for you.

Would anyone, Christian or not, be foolish enough to say that he has never had God do anything for him?

The very air you breathe, the food you eat, etc.--all are tokens of His goodness to us.

But we get so accustomed to His blessings, or we are so blinded as to the source of our blessings, that we just do not see the need for praising God.

If you are a Christian, you owe a debt of gratitude to God which you will never be able to pay.

But, let us look more closely at the psalm. What was

II. The SUBJECT of their praise?

Any boy or girl who is able to read this chapter could tell me that Moses and the people of Israel were praising God, first of all, because

- A. They were free--free from the Egyptians and all of the bondage which they represented.

In vv. 1-12 they are revelling in this glorious realization. The RSV renders v. 6b, "thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy!"

Think of the joy that was theirs! The power of Egypt was broken as far as they were concerned.

But, now, we are thinking of turning the Word into prayer. Let me ask myself, Has the Lord set me free from anything?

Let me remind you of Romans 6, esp. vv. 17, 18:

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

Paul is one step ahead of us; he not only was thankful that God had done this for him, but he was praising the Lord that He had done the same for some of the people of Rome.

Have you ever thanked God that you are no longer under the tyranny of sin--that the power of sin is broken, and the penalty of sin no longer hangs over you?

If the Israelites praised God as they did for a temporal deliverance, what should be our praise for eternal deliverance from sin and its power?

But there is more here. The psalm teaches me that they were also praising the Lord for

B. His guidance in their lives. See v. 13.

Do you remember what Israel's attitude had been concerning the way the Lord had led them when they were on the other side of the Red Sea? Read Ex. 14: 10-12.

They had been so wise; God had been the One who was making the mistakes.

Now they see it all differently. They see that God led them the way He did not only to make them trust Him, but also so that He could destroy their enemies.

They are thankful for the mercy of the Lord--that He did not destroy them because of their rebellion, and they are thankful for the power of the Lord--that He did not let them go where they wanted to go!

As you think about your own experience, can you think

of times when you have be just like the Israelites? You did not like the way the Lord was leading you, and you told Him so--or, at least, you told others!

Do you know how to get those things cleared up. Let your confession be turned into praise, and you do just what the Israelites did: Praise Him that He continued to deal with you, and that He kept you from having your own way.

This is turning the Word into prayer.

And still there is more.

From v. 14 on the people were encouraged, on the basis of what they had seen Him do to the Egyptians, to praise Him for what He was going to do to all of the nations that yet stood in their way.

So they praised God that

C. He was adequate for all of the problems of the future.

1. If He could take care of the Egyptians, then He could take care of all of their lesser enemies (vv. 14-16).

Dear Christian, have you ever stopped to realize that since God through Christ has been able to deliver you from Satan's power, from sin, and from death, you have no need to fear anything. God is equal and superior to anything that can possibly enter your life.

The Israelites realized this, and praised God for it. Will you do the same?

2. If God could get them out of Egypt, then He could get them into Canaan (v. 17).

When you get discouraged, do you ever praise God that Phil. 1:6 is still in the Word?

3. The present victory as further assurance of the ultimate triumph of the Lord over all men: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (v. 18).

Now you can see how prophetic truth can so easily be turned into praise.

Concl: What a psalm!

But are you thinking what I am thinking? IS IT NOT A PITY THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL COULD HAVE MAINTAINED SUCH AN ATTITUDE OF PRAISE TO THE LORD THROUGHOUT ALL OF THEIR DAYS?

If they had, there would have been no wandering for forty years in the wilderness.

Why did they fail? I believe the psalm gives us the answer.

As they sing this psalm their minds and hearts and voices are completely taken up with the Lord Himself.

NOT EVEN MOSES IS MENTIONED IN THE PSALM!

But in v. 24 we read, "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?"

Then in Ex. 16:2, "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness . . ."

Now circumstances and people have obscured the Lord --and the praise is gone!

Can any of us criticize them?

No, for we are all guilty of doing the same.

However, in turning this psalm into prayer and praise we will learn for ourselves that praising God gives us peace for the past, the present, and the future.

And so, let us praise Him!