

THE SONG OF VICTORY

Moses - Part 9
Exodus 15:1-21

Intro: This chapter, at least the first twenty-one verses, occupies a very special place in Scripture. *It is the first psalm recorded in the Bible.* As far as I have been able to determine, checking my memory and also my concordance, there is no previous mention of music or singing in Genesis, or up to this point in the book of Exodus. This is a very important point to recognize in a book which places such a strong emphasis on hymns and singing. As you all know, the longest book in the Bible is what we could call *a hymn book*: the book of Psalms. It is recorded in the NT that after the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper, "and when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14L26). And in Ephesians 5:19 we learn that one of the first evidences of being filled with the Spirit was that they would be

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

But here in Exodus 15 is where it all started. I trust that we will learn some important truth regarding the place that music, and the kind of music, is to have in the lives of the people of God. In commemoration of this event, Psalm 106, written concerning the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, their journey to Canaan, and some of their subsequent history, it is said after their deliverance from the Egyptians, that "then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (Psa. 106:12).

So this is the first point that we can make:

I. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SANG THEIR PRAISE TO THE LORD.

We don't read at the end of Exodus 14 nor at the beginning of Exodus 15, that the Lord commanded them to do what they did. They had seen the amazing work that the Lord had done in delivering them from the Egyptians in a totally unexpected way, and in spite of their unbelief, and they sang praise to the Lord. We aren't given any details as to who wrote it, how long it took, or how it was to be done. I think we are safe in saying that Moses must have written it, but even that is not clear. What we do know told us in the last verse, or verses, of chapter 14, and based upon what they saw of the work of the Lord, and that they knew it was the work

of the Lord, “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord” (Ex. 15:1).

This was one of those high spots in the history of the Lord’s people. There was a lot of complaining and rebellion among the people of Israel before and during their journey to the land of Canaan, but here they were united in praise. And what a wonderful hymn, or psalm, it was. We don’t have the music; we just have the words.

When we get down to the end of our text for today we find that Miriam led the women in responding to the men in a musical response. Today we call this antiphonal singing. The men would sing a line or two, and then the women would respond with the same words that the men had just sung. It was like an echo. Notice that verse 21 is almost identical to verse 1. The women had timbrels in their hands, and as they sang, they danced for joy.

It must have been a great sound to hear and a great sight to behold. The earth must literally have resounded with the praise offered from at least a million and a half to two million people. It must not only have pleased the Lord, but it must have been inspiring to the people. I doubt if there was ever a choir like this afterwards, men and women, so happy to be free from the Egyptians, and praising God Who by Himself had opened the Red Sea for the children of Israel to pass over, and on dry ground, holding back the Egyptians with the cloud of His presence, getting the people safely through, and then causing the Egyptians to think that they could do what the Israelites had done, only to be entirely destroyed as the Lord released the waters on top of Pharaoh and his army so that all of them died in the Red Sea. It is practically impossible for us to visualize what happened, and how relieved and how thankful the children of Israel were.

But I want you to notice another thing in this song of victory and of praise.

II. MOSES IS NEVER MENTIONED IN THIS GREAT PSALM.

Moses was God’s instrument for the deliverance. He held his rod over the sea when the pathway opened up for the children of Israel to go through. And he stretched out his rod over the sea again so that the waters closed up again, drowning all of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. But even though the Lord had used Moses as His instrument Moses did not

refer to himself in the Psalm, but all, yes, ALL of the praise was given to the Lord. Moses did what he did in both instances, opening up a path in the sea, and then closing it again, in response to what the Lord told him to do. But still the people gave the praise to the Lord.

Undoubtedly the people were very grateful for Moses and the leadership that he had given them. But when it came to thanking the One Who was solely responsible for their deliverance, they knew that the glory belonged all to God, and only to God.

The Apostle Paul in a verse which I referred to a short time ago, indicates that when we sing properly and together as the people of God, we are speaking to each other, but we are giving the praise to God from our hearts. Listen to Ephesians 5:19 as I read it again:

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

We are not singing to show off our voices, but we are singing “to yourselves,” that is, to each other, ministering to each other, but our singing is to come out of our hearts and sent directly to the Lord.

When we sing, we are ministering to one another. Sometimes when we sing, I stop and listen to the words that you are singing. So you are ministering to me. But I probably shouldn't do that because while you are ministering to me, I should be ministering to you, and together we are to be ministering to the Lord, praising Him, worshiping Him. And everybody should be singing – men, women, young people, and children (boys and girls). If we are singing the right music, and singing for the right purpose, music can be and is intended to be a great blessing to us, and of great glory to God.

As most of you know, before Lucille and I and our family came to Portland in 1951, I was a pastor in Vancouver, B.C. for a few years. The year we arrived in Vancouver, there was a city-wide Bible teaching and evangelistic series of meetings taking place in a large, downtown theater. I don't remember who the preacher was, but I will never forget the singing. And one song in particular remains in my mind to this day. I think that it was the first time I had heard it. The song was, “To God be the glory.” Those Canadians really were singing their hearts out. And when they would get to the chorus after each verse, and they would sing, “Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice; Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice,” I wouldn't have been sur-

prised at all to see the roof of that theater blown right off. It was tremendous! And I am still blessed as I think of that day. Obviously the people were blessed, and God was glorified. That is the way it ought to be.

But if our singing is to bless each other, and to glorify God, there must be one main characteristic to what we sing. And we see this in what the Israelites were singing. Note:

III. OUR HYMNS NEED TO BE GOD-CENTERED.

So much music that is sung in churches today is men-centered, not God-centered. To illustrate what I mean, let me read the song that the children of Israel sang on the shores of the Red Sea. (Read Ex. 15:1-21.)

This is the way we ought to read our Bibles, noting what it teaches us about the Lord – and I am including not only the Father, but also our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Now let me run through the Psalm once again with you, noting the divisions of the prayer.

First, note what they sang *about the Lord* in the first five verses. And they not only recognized Him as the Lord and what He had done, but in verse 2 they claimed a personal relationship with Him. Four times they used the word “my,” and once it is implied. Note the expression, “The Lord is my . . . song.” Their song was so much about Him that He was actually their song. The Lord sometimes, as in this instance, shows Himself as “a man of war.” There is no nation, nor any group of nations, that can stand against Him. He can and will defeat them all, as they recognize later in the song.

Secondly, note that in verses 6 through 13 they are talking *to the Lord*. In doing this they recognized how great and glorious the Lord had shown Himself to be in what He had done. They told the Lord in verse 9 what the enemy had said that they would do, and then in verse 10 how the Lord had responded. And then again Moses and the people reveled in the very character of God, recognizing that there was no god like their God.

In verses 14, 15, and 16 Moses and the people recognize the effect that their deliverance from the Egyptians will have upon other people.

In verses 17 and 18 Moses and the people look ahead. The deliverance *from* the Egyptians was encouraging evidence that some day the Lord would reign “forever and ever.” The promises of Scripture, which actually are prophecies, are often so far beyond what men can do that they seem impossible to us as the Lord’s people *until we stop to remember Who the Lord is, and what He can do.*

Verse 19 gives the reason why the people of God, then and now, can be so sure that the promises of God are dependable. It is because, since He can do what He did to the Egyptians, no nation can successfully frustrate the promises and purposes of the Lord.

Concl: But how quickly the Israelites forgot the truth of this great hymn, as the rest of the chapter indicates. We, too, fail to apply the lessons the Lord teaches us to the next time when it appears that we have an impossible situation. The God Who can destroy the entire Egyptian army will have no trouble in providing water for those who are thirsty.

Let us make the application to our own circumstances. The God Who was able to deliver His people from the mighty Egyptians, is sufficient for whatever needs we face. One of the mistakes we make is failing to apply the faithfulness of God to His people in the past, to the present possibly impossible circumstances we are facing today. God has not changed. His Word has not changed. Therefore, we need to trust Him. The big question is not *if*, nor *how*, but *when*.