

“Tremble, O Earth”
Psalm 114
(Preached at Trinity, August 26, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 114** is the second of six psalms known as the “Egyptian Hallel.” They were psalms that were customarily sung during the Passover.
Psalm 114 is the only one that actually speaks specifically of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. But the words used to describe this event are truly marvelous. All who have studied it and wrote about it have been overwhelmed by its majesty.
Spurgeon: True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this Psalm.”
James Montgomery Boice called it a “Little Masterpiece.”
Derek Kidner wrote of the Psalm’s portrayal of the Exodus, “as startling as a clap of thunder, as shattering as an earthquake.”
William Plummer wrote, “It is elegantly and energetically composed”
2. Isaac Watts was also overwhelmed by this Psalm and penned a majestic poem:

*When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,
Left the proud tyrant and his land,
The tribes with cheerful homage own
Their King, and Judah was his throne.*

*Across the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
The streams of Jordan saw, and fled
With backward current to their head.*

*The mountains shook like frightened sheep,
Like lambs the little hillocks leap;
Not Sinai on her base could stand,
Conscious of sovereign power's hand.*

*What power could make the deep divide?
Make Jordan backward roll his tide?
Why did ye leap, ye little hills?
And whence the fright that Sinai feels?*

*Let every mountain, and every flood,
Retire, and know the approaching God,
The King of Israel! see him here:
Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.*

*He thunders—and all nature mourns;
The rock to standing pools he turns;
Flints spring with fountains at his word,
And fires and seas confess their Lord.*

3. This psalm speaks of God's power and dominion from start to finish. The key phrase is "Tremble, Thou earth." Although the word "praise" is not found in this psalm who can read it without exclaiming, "Praise ye the LORD!"
 4. I'll divide this psalm into four parts
 - I. The Salvation – **Verses 1-2** – We find God coming down to deliver His people
 - II. The Surrender – **Verses 3-4** – We find every obstacle falling before His power
 - III. The Scrutiny – **Verses 5-6** – The psalmist asks four rhetorical questions
 - IV. The Statute – **Verses 7-8** – The final charge
- I. The Salvation – **Verses 1-2** – We find God coming down to deliver His people
 - A. Remember the context
 1. This is the second of six psalms sung around the Passover
The first two were sung before the Passover, the last four sung after
 2. In **Psalm 113** we find the majestic transcendence of God.
 - a. He is high above His creation.
Psalm 113:4 KJV - "The LORD *is* high above all nations"
 - b. Then the psalmist asks the question:
Psalm 113:5 KJV - "Who *is* like unto the LORD our God"
 3. But this infinitely great God has condescended to sinful men
Psalm 113:6 KJV - "Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth!"
 4. This psalm opens with the great demonstration of this condescension
Exodus 2:24-25 KJV - "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*."
 - B. God is portrayed as a very present Deliverer
 1. **Verse 1** describes their deliverance without giving details of the miraculous plagues in Egypt. We are only reminded of two important points:
 - a. After 430 years they were still a distinct people – "the house of Jacob"
 - b. After 430 years they were still strangers in the land – "strange language"
 - c. The people of God are always pilgrims and strangers. The language of the heathen is never sweet to our ears.
Spurgeon: "How sweet it is to a Christian who has been compelled to hear the filthy conversation of the wicked, when at last he is brought out from their midst to dwell among his own people!"
 2. **Verse 2** portrays God as a covenant keeping God – a God who maintains His presence with His people
Judah was the dwelling place of God – His sanctuary
Israel was the place of His dominion – His Kingdom
 3. Depending when this psalm was written we find the unity of God's people
Judah = Southern Kingdom, Israel = Northern Kingdom
 4. God's mighty rule is the focus – He was powerful to deliver His people. He is powerful to rule His people. Let all the earth tremble before His absolute power. Have you bowed before Him?

- II. The Surrender – **Verses 3-4** – We find every obstacle falling before His power
- A. The earth is personified as fleeing before the presence & power of God
1. "The sea saw *it*, and fled"
This, of course, is reference to the parting of the Red Sea which parted at the command of God
 2. "Jordan was driven back."
This is reference to the Jordan River parting for Israel to cross into Canaan
 3. "Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams; *and* ye little hills, like lambs?"
 - a. This could refer to Mount Sinai that smoked and trembled at the voice of God
Exodus 19:18 KJV - "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."
 - b. It could also refer to the elevated topography of Canaan. These high places were filled with Canaanites who could not stand before the mighty hand of God.
Joshua 5:1 KJV - "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which *were* on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which *were* by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel."
 4. All of creation moves at the command of God. He does His pleasure.
Daniel 4:35 KJV - "And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
- B. This should cause all men to rise up and take notice
None shall stand before the mighty hand of God
- III. The Scrutiny – **Verses 5-6** – The psalmist asks four rhetorical questions
- A. Why? What caused such an instant response?
Psalms 114:5 KJV - "What *ailed* thee"
1. What stirred them to action?
 2. The answer is already clear – God commands. He disposes. He rules. Every molecule marches to God's orders.
 3. The Psalms often personify God's creation:
Psalms 97:5-6 KJV - "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. ⁶ The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory."
Psalms 98:7-8 KJV - "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. ⁸ Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together"

4. The point is all of creation moves at God's command. He displays His glory in His displays of Providence—as He displays His great power.
 5. John Calvin – “the sea, which, though a lifeless and senseless element, is yet struck with terror at the power of God. The sea, in rendering such obedience to its Creator, sanctified his name; and Jordan, by its submission, put honor upon his power; and the mountains, by their quaking, proclaimed how they were overawed at the presence of his dreadful majesty.”
- B. We find a clear teaching of the Providence of God
1. 1689 Confession, Chapter 5: *Of Divine Providence*, paragraph 1:
“God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.”
 2. Who is behind the hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, tsunamis, wild fires, and floods? Who brings famines and plagues? Is God not Lord over all? What about 9/11? Is God not Lord over all?
 3. The church today is weak on the Providence of God. After 9/11 many evangelicals leaders declared that God had no part in this tragedy. NOTHING happens apart from God's sovereign direction.
- IV. The Statute – **Verses 7-8** – The final charge
- Psalm 114:7 KJV** - "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord"
- A. First, we find again a very present God – “at the presence of the Lord"
1. He is actively ruling
 2. He is actively displaying His power in governing His world
- B. The only response to such infinite power - "Tremble, thou earth"
1. This is a universal expectation - "Tremble, thou earth"
 2. All of creation trembles in reverence before its Creator.
All except sinful man.
 3. Even Satan bows before the command of Christ
Matthew 4:10-11 NAS - "Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only. Then the devil left Him"
The Gerasene Demoniac –
Mark 5:6-7 NAU - "Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; ⁷ and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!"
 4. Sinful man refuses to bow. He has determined in his heart to dismiss God.
He has banished God from his presence.
- C. The psalm ends with a wonderful encouragement to God's people. This mighty God before whom all tremble is in the midst of His people providing them with life giving water.

Conclusion:

1. Those who know God bow before Him in glorious worship
Psalm 104:31-35 KJV - "The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. ³² He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. ³³ I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. ³⁴ My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. ³⁵ Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD."
2. Israel was a nation under the reign of God. They were a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, God's own possession. No other nation has ever been able to make that claim. But Israel was only a foreshadow of the people of God. We are that people.
1 Peter 2:9-10 KJV - " But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰ Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."
3. Every verse of this psalm causes our hearts to leap for they speak of us—God's holy people. All of the earth trembles before our King.
 Have you bowed before Him?