

The Song at the Sea  
Exodus 15:1-21  
Lebanon PCA, Rev. Lane Keister

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Do we have anything to sing about? Do we have any person to sing about? This life can get so hum-drum, so ho-hum, so boring, that we feel that there is almost nothing out there that can be exciting enough to sing about. We live in an entertainment age. And unless we are entertained, we can't get excited about anything. Entertainment, in fact, often makes real life seem dull. But just imagine that you are an Israelite. You had just seen the huge wind of God blow like a gale. You had seen the waters pile up on either side like a wall. You had just walked through these two walls, trembling at every step, wondering if it really was safe. Then you had practically run those last few steps so as to get out of that threatening wall of sea. Then you had turned around and seen the Egyptians following, chasing after you in their fast chariots. Then you had seen the floor of the sea steadily become more muddy, so that the chariots got stuck. You saw them get into a panic and start to head the other direction. Then you saw the wall of water collapsing on them, and drowning them in the depths of the sea. After all of that, you would probably be speechless, at least for a little while. But then, you would have shouted aloud to the God who had just saved your life in a miraculous way. And you would have sung this song with all your might. There is something to sing about: our God, who gives us salvation. This passage is a song to the Lord God of Israel, who had saved His people miraculously through the Red Sea. The song praises God for who He is, and for what He has done. All the glory and the praise and the singing are directed to God.

The passage divides into two parts. The first part goes from verses 1 to verse 5. These verses describe God. What kind of a God is He, and what has He done? Then, verses 6-21 are directed to God. So the first part is praise about God, and the second part is praise to God. But both parts are about God, and are a hymn of praise to God for deliverance. What we will see is that we must praise the same God for bringing about a similar, but much more glorious deliverance in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And our response must be the same: heartfelt praise and singing at who God is, and what God has done.

So the first part praises God for who He is. We say that God has certain qualities about Him. We call these His attributes. For instance, in verse 1, we see God's majesty. The text says that God is highly exalted. That means majesty. He is majestic in His holiness. These words rendered "triumphed gloriously" in the NKJV can also be translated "surged." The surging up of God is like the surging of the Red Sea when it comes over the Egyptians. Probably also there is a sideways glance here at the pride of the Egyptians, who thought that they would be the ones to surge up against God and against His people. Notice how "me-focused" the Egyptians were in verse 9, where the words "I" or "my" repeat six times in one single verse. Plainly the Egyptians were exalting themselves against the Lord, and against His anointed. Anytime that happens, God has a habit of throwing them down and showing that He alone is exalted. He is the true King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Moses shows us that even the false gods that are worshiped among the heathen are nothing to God. Obviously, if even the so-called gods of the people are

worthless, then how much less can mortal humanity exalt itself against the Lord. Are you impressed yet? If not, just wait. It gets better.

A second attribute, or quality of God that we see is given for us in verse 2. The Lord is said to be the strength of the person singing. In other words, God is all-powerful. He is Sovereign. But this attribute is not just “out there,” having no effect on me. For here it says that the Lord is MY strength. God's power has been at work for me. It reminds me of playgrounds, where a bigger boy is trying to bully a smaller boy. The smaller boy will cry out, “Just you wait until my big brother hears about this. Then you'll be sorry!” The little boy is appealing to the fact that he knows someone who can help. And that older brother can help because of his power. And the little boy knows that his big brother will go to bat *for him*. When we get to be adults, it sometimes works out as “having friends in high places.” It is often helpful to know someone and be friends with someone who can get things done for you. How much more, then, ought we to rejoice that the greatest power in the universe is on our side! Are you impressed yet? Wait, it gets better.

The third attribute of God that is shown here is His compassion, His mercy. It says in verse 2 that He has become my salvation. Again, notice that important word “my.” God's attributes are not just “out there.” Rather, God exercises those attributes for our benefit. And we have most reason to be grateful that God exercises His great compassion on us. For we as sinners are in need of salvation. So for God to become our salvation is a truly wonderful thing. In the Old Testament, that looked like the Exodus. In the New Testament, that looks like Jesus Christ. Are you impressed yet? If not, wait. There's more.

The fourth attribute that is shown here is His eternal nature. There is no beginning or end with God. We see that in verse 2 also, where it says that God is “my father's God.” It doesn't specify who the father is, and the word “father” could mean grandfather, great-grandfather, and so on, all the way back to Adam. But the point is that God doesn't change in His mercy towards us. He is always the same. We may change like the shifting shadows, but God always remains the same. Nothing can take God by surprise, because He has already seen it all, from eternity past. Are you impressed yet? Wait. There's more.

The fifth attribute we see in these verses is God's justice. We see that God pronounced and executed judgment on Egypt. Verse 3 calls the Lord a warrior. He fights for what is right, and He will always win the battle, for no one can stand up against the Lord of Hosts. But what makes the Lord into a warrior is justice. He saw how the Israelites had been mistreated and oppressed for hundreds of years, and so He made it right. And He fought for the right.

So we see God in many different facets of His existence here. We see that He is majestic, all-powerful, compassionate, eternal, and just. And all of these things are for us! For we see God's majesty in exalting Christ to the name that is above every name. We see God's power in raising Jesus Christ from the dead. We see God's compassion in sending Jesus to the cross to die for us. We see God's eternal nature in planning for this to happen even before the world began. And we see God's sense of justice in bringing the whole world before the judgment seat of Christ. All of these attributes, then, are for us, and for our salvation. We had better be impressed by now.

We have seen, then, something about who God is, and what He has done. Now it is time to praise the Lord. Verses 6-21 are directed to God. Now we address God as “you” instead of “Him.” The Israelites here praise God in response to salvation past, and the promise of how God will save them in the future. Of course, we are only talking about the very recent past. In fact, the language of verse 1 shows us that they sang this song while they were still staring at all the dead Egyptians washed up on the shore. The only proper response to God for such a great deliverance is to sing.

When you read your Bible, notice how many times a great salvation is followed by a song. Even Adam and Eve in the garden, after they had been banished, and after they had been punished, they still knew that God was going to save them. And that is why they sang when God gave them a child. And we have that response recorded for us. This song in Exodus 15 is the first recorded response of the people of Israel to their God. In the book of Judges, after Deborah, Barak, and Jael had been used mightily by the Lord to deliver the people of Israel, we have a song in response to it in Judges 5. After the Lord made those wonderful promises to Solomon, he praised the Lord for giving him wisdom. Most of the Psalms that praise the Lord do so because of some deliverance for the Psalmist. This happened countless times in the life of David, of course. In the New Testament, after Simeon sees Jesus, he sings. After Mary is visited by the angel and told of her role in bearing Jesus, she sings. After salvation comes song. After salvation comes music. Rightly will the saints in glory be singing the praises of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, because their final salvation, the resurrection of the body, will happen then. But even today, after what Jesus Christ has done, we have reason to be singing every day the praises of our God.

For Israel, God did things in the past that influence the future course of events. Pharaoh and Egypt were judged in the Red Sea. They were consumed like stubble, as it says in verse 7. This is poetic justice, for that word for “stubble” is the exact same word used to describe the building materials that the Israelites had to use to make bricks. But, just as the Egyptians eventually took away the stubble, leaving the Israelites with nothing, so also the Lord took away the Egyptians, treating them like so much stubble that is blown away on the wind. And God does this easily. Any time you see the words “at the blast of your nostrils,” as we see in verse 8, you can readily imagine that this judgment on the Egyptians was as easy for God as, say, breathing.

This means that all the kings of those people who live in the promised land (mentioned in verses 14-16) will be trembling, knowing that they are next. Egypt was the superpower of the day. Just as God judged Egypt, so He will also judge the wicked people of the land. And as He judged those, so also He will judge all those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

There is a before and after here. The Exodus means that the people will enter the promised land. For us, Christ's first coming means also His second coming. Because we have been saved from our Egypt of sin, so also we will be saved to the promised land of the new heavens and the new earth. If that isn't something to sing about, I don't know what is.

One great thing about exalting God and worshiping Him is that it puts life in perspective. Let's try a little thought experiment. Imagine that you have a fairly good-sized apple, and that

you are standing near a mountain. Now imagine putting that apple right in front of your eyes. Imagine that it's a big enough apple to get in the way of seeing that mountain. The mountain is millions of times bigger than the puny little apple, and yet if we hold the apple right in front of our own eyes, we can't see the mountain. Similarly, our troubles and trials in this life, while they do not seem small, are small when compared with the mountain that is God Almighty. Put down the apple of your trouble for a minute, and see the mountain of God. You might think that this apple of trouble is too heavy to carry. Well, then, throw it up the mountain. Do you think the mountain will crack under the strain of bearing up this puny little apple? Lift up your eyes and see the Lord of glory! And then sing!

Revelation 15:2-3 are a great way to close this sermon. This really should lift us up into heaven itself so that we can see God with the eyes of faith: And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

We may be people who are not easily impressed. We may be people who live lives that have a lot of repetition in them. We may have lives that seem hum-drum or ho-hum to us. But lift up your eyes to the heavens! See the great God of your salvation with the eyes of faith! See the Lord Jesus infinitely exalted above every name with a majesty that surpasses everything! We sing the Gloria Patri and the Doxology in every morning service. That is not just something tacked on to the end of the service. There is a reason for singing that, and it is that all glory belongs to God alone, God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We need to mean what we sing when we sing that. Every time, it needs to be fresh in our minds the beautiful meaning of those words. And we need to sing every hymn with gusto and enthusiasm. For we have something to sing about!

## Sermon Outline

### I. Singing to God

### II. Why We Sing

#### A. Who God is and what He has done

##### 1. Majestic

##### 2. Powerful

##### 3. Compassionate

4. Eternal

5. Just

6. All brought together in Christ.

III. Singing to God because of salvation

IV. Application