

Exodus 15:12-27
The Song of Moses, pt. 2

Last week, we began looking at the Song of Moses recorded in Exodus 15

- We noted that this isn't just the Song of Moses
- This is the song that all Israel sang

They had ample reason for singing, didn't they?

- They had just been delivered by God's mighty hand
- They had just crossed the Red Sea on dry land

In a word, Israel was celebrating their salvation

- For the first time in hundreds of years, they were free!
- They were no longer in bondage to Egypt

In thankful response for what God had done, Israel sang

- They sang the Song of Moses

Let's read Exodus 15:1-21

This Song highlights three (3) of God's attributes

- His power
- His distinctness
- His faithfulness

Let's review what we discussed last week

- Then move on to the final attribute

I. Praise God for His power (15:1-6)

Israel praises God for His power in several ways in these verses

First, Moses and Israel sing, "**the LORD is my strength**"

- God is the Refuge for Israel

The nation wasn't praising Moses for his strength

- The nation was praising God for His strength

Second, Moses and Israel speak of God as "**a warrior**"

- God was showing His power by fighting for Israel

The overwhelming victory clearly showed God's supremacy over the Egyptians

- There was no comparison

Third, God's power is seen in what happened to Pharaoh's chariots and army, "**He has cast into the sea**" (15:4)

- He drowned the mightiest and most elite of the Egyptian army

Fourth, Moses and Israel praise God for His power, as seen in the two descriptions of His right hand

- “majestic in power” – this demonstration of God’s power brought glory, honor, and fame to God’s reputation
- “shatters the enemy” – nothing can stop or slow down God’s hand from accomplishing His purpose

God did something remarkable at the Red Sea crossing

- He showed just how powerful He is

But God also showed another aspect of His character

II. Praise God for His distinctness (15:7-11)

When I say “distinctness,” I refer to the fact that God is unlike any other

- There is no one or nothing else that we can point to and say, “That’s exactly what God is like.”

Humanity is made in the image of God

- We reflect His image

But we would have to admit rather quickly that we are so unlike God in many ways

Theologians refer to God’s attributes in two main categories

- Communicable – attributes that God and man share
- Incommunicable – attributes that God and man do not share

For example, we are like God in that

- We have access to knowledge (even though God has perfect knowledge and we do not)
- We can possess wisdom (even though God has perfect wisdom at every point in time)
- We can show love (even though God shows perfect love at all times)

But there are plenty of ways in which God is very unlike mankind (incommunicable attributes)¹

- God is independent; He doesn’t need anyone else
- God doesn’t change; He makes no mistakes
- God is eternal; there has never been a time when He didn’t exist
- God is omnipresent; He can be present in multiple locations at the same time

In Exodus 15:7-11, Israel praises God for His distinctness

First, God exercised His wrath toward the Egyptians, and they were consumed “as chaff”

- The Egyptians were no contest for God’s “burning anger”

Granted, there may be times in which our anger may be righteous

- But more times than not, our anger is sinful

God’s anger, however, is always righteous

- It is never sinful

Second, God caused the waters of the Red Sea to stand on edge like two walls

- This was something that no man could do

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 71-81.

The Text describes God doing this with two explanations

- “the blast of Your nostrils”
- “blow(ing) with Your wind”

It didn’t take a lot of energy for God to do this

- Just a breath

In verse 11, Israel extols God for being distinct

- “Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders”

What a verse!

- What a statement!

What a mighty God we serve!

- He is incomparable!
- He is distinct!

Twice, Moses and Israel ask the rhetorical question, “Who is like Thee?”

- The answer – NO ONE!

No one else can

- Stand the raging waters of the Red Sea on end
- Overtake an enemy with just a breath

God is so unlike any other gods

- “majestic in holiness” – His holiness should elicit praise from us
- “awesome in praises” – He inspires awe and reverence
- “working wonders” – the miracle at the Red Sea should cause us to be amazed

This Song has highlighted two (2) aspects of God

- His power (15:1-6)
- His distinctness (15:7-11)

But there is a 3rd aspect of God’s character that we want to look at this morning

III. Praise God for His faithfulness (15:12-18)

12 Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

Yet again, we see a reference to God’s “right hand”

- We have already seen it in verse 6

Here God is seen to be stretching out His right hand

- The result is that “the earth swallowed them”

This is the same word used back in Exodus 7:12 for how Aaron’s staff “swallowed” the staffs of the Egyptian magicians²

² John D. Currid, *An EP Study Commentary, Exodus, Vol 1*, 319.

Here in Exodus 15, God is seen to be victorious over the Egyptians

- It's a poetic way of describing the devastation and destruction of the elite Egyptian army

13 In Thy lovingkindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed; in Thy strength Thou hast guided *them* to Thy holy habitation.

Israel speaks of God's "**lovingkindness**"

- This is a rich word that demands a brief study

About 75% of the time, this Hebrew word is translated "**lovingkindness**"

- But it can also be translated as
 - o Loyalty
 - o Kindness
 - o Mercy
 - o Faithfulness

When I see the English word "**lovingkindness**," I think of the phrase "covenant faithfulness"

- This is God's loyal love to His people, Israel

We remind ourselves that Israel didn't deserve or merit God's love

- Israel certainly didn't sustain that love on their own

How rich a word, then, to be used here in the Song!

- It reminds us of God's merciful, tender faithfulness to His people

Let's read the opening phrase of verse 13 again, "**In Thy lovingkindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed**"

- God leads with mercy

God redeemed His people from Egypt

- But He didn't stop
- He continued to lead them, in covenant faithfulness

This is the same term used in Lamentations 3, "**The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.**

They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness" (3:22-23, emphasis mine)

- God's covenant mercies are new every morning
- God is faithful to His people, each and every day!

We might see this in sharper contrast if we say something that we know **not** to be true

- "God redeems a people for Himself, but then leaves them on their own."

We would balk at such a statement

- And rightfully so

But isn't it oftentimes the case that when we face a trial, we so easily question the faithfulness of God?

- For some reason, we allow ourselves to entertain ungodly thinking such as the statement that I just made

Dear friend, if God has redeemed you, there will NEVER be a time when He will be unfaithful to you

- You may need to redefine what “faithfulness” means
 - o He won’t bail you out of every situation when you want Him to
 - o He won’t change His plan to conform you to the image of Christ
 - o He won’t lighten up on the costs of discipleship

Verse 13 praises God for His faithfulness

- But it also says, “**in Thy strength Thou hast guided *them* to Thy holy habitation**”

God’s tender guidance is like that of a Shepherd guiding His sheep

- Listen to Psalm 78:52, “**But He led forth His own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock**”

What is in mind by the phrase “**Thy holy dwelling**”?

- There are several options

It might refer to Sinai, where the nation would be given the Law

- It might refer to the Promised Land
- It might refer to the Temple

The word for “**dwelling**” refers to a place of rest

- It was oftentimes used of pasture for cattle

So it would be natural for Israel to desire this place of future rest

- A place where they could settle down

This dwelling place is described as “**holy**”

- A place set apart for God’s purposes

This faithful, covenant-keeping God had led Israel out in the past

- Israel was certain that God would lead them in the future³

God would be faithful to lead His people to a place of rest

Verses 14-16 have caused a bit of controversy over the years

- The verbs used are in the past tense⁴

But the problem is that the events, at the time of the Red Sea, had not happened yet

- So why not use the future tense?

It is true that Israel had not faced these nations

- They had just been delivered from the Egyptians at the Red Sea

But we also have to keep in mind that Moses wrote this book after the events took place

So in one sense, when Moses wrote these words, he could use the past tense

- Because in his mind, they were a past reality

³ Michael Bentley, *Travelling Homeward*, 182.

⁴ John L. Mackay, *A Mentor Commentary, Exodus*, 270.

In another sense, Moses could use the past tense as a guarantee to Israel

- In other words, God's promises were so sure that he could write them in the past tense
- Even though they had not taken place yet!

This is similar to how Paul writes in Romans 8:30, “**whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified**”

- We have been predestined, called, and justified
- But we haven't been glorified yet

But Paul is so sure that God will accomplish this in the lives of the believers that he records it as a past tense

- As if it has already taken place!

Moses describes other nations and how they respond to Israel

- “**they tremble**”
- “**anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia**”

14 The peoples have heard, they tremble; anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.

Many times in the OT, non-Jews are referred to simply as “**peoples**”

- That's what we have here in verse 14

Pagan, unbelieving nations were beginning to hear of what God had done for His people

- In Egypt
- At the Red Sea

How did they respond to such news?

First, we are told, “**they tremble**”

- It is an internal quaking from fear
- It is an accelerated excitement
- It is an agitation of spirit
- It is a feeling of panic and unrest

Second, we read, “**anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia**”

- This word was used of the sudden, uncontrollable spasms of pain associated with childbirth (Ps 48:6; Jer 6:24; 22:23; 50:43; Micah 4:9)

In other words, when the pagan nations heard of what the LORD had done for His people, they were in a state of panic

- They trembled
- They had unrest

The reason for this is fairly straightforward

- If God destroyed the mighty Egyptian army, then God would easily overthrow these other nations!
- They had better beware!

The arrogance and pompous attitude is totally reversed

- They are struck with mortal fear⁵

⁵ Cornelis Houtman, *Historical Commentary on the OT, Exodus, Vol 2*, 288.

15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

In verses 14-15, four different countries are listed

- Philistia
- Edom
- Moab
- Canaan

This isn't a random order⁶

- It is the order in which Israel would have encountered each one of these nations
- It is a geographical sequence

Let's take a brief look at each one of these countries⁷

- Each one was an enemy of Israel

“Philistia”

- These are the Philistines
- They fought with Israel during the early years of their time in the Promised Land

Samson struggled with Philistines

- Goliath is perhaps the most famous Philistine

“Edom”

- These are the descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother

The Edomites refused to allow Israel to pass through their land (Num 20)

- As you can imagine, this wasn't a gesture that was soon forgotten

“Moab”

- These are the descendants of Lot

“the inhabitants of Canaan”

- Sometimes, this is a summary term for all the people groups who lived in the Promised Land
- Other times, it is a specific term to describe one particular people group

From the book of Joshua, we have two accounts of the pagan nations showing their terror of what they had heard about the LORD

- Rahab told the spies, **“I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed”** (2:8-10)
- The Gibeonites told the sons of Israel, **“Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt”** (9:9)

Even here in verse 15, we are told, **“all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away”**

- They were demoralized⁸

⁶ Currid, 321.

⁷ Ibid., 321.

⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary, Exodus*, 81.

16 Terror and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they are motionless as stone; until Thy people pass over, O LORD, until the people pass over whom Thou hast purchased.

This is another summary statement

- This time of how the pagan nations would respond to what they had heard about the LORD's mighty acts toward His own people

Listen again to the words that are used

- “**terror and dread fall upon them**”
- “**they are motionless as stone**”

Just the news of what God has done causes a type of paralysis⁹

- These nations realize that they can't mount any type of resistance

17 Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.

Verse 17 is such a wonderful, rich explanation of God's plan for Israel

- He will lead them
- He will “**plant**” them

This isn't a word that denotes a temporary home

- To “**plant**” refers to a permanent home

All of this, of course, is the result of what God has done for His people

18 The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

The Song of Moses ends with verse 18

- What a Song this is!
- What an expression of worship, thanksgiving, and gratitude

The Song ends just the way that it began¹⁰

- Praising God
- Exalting Yahweh

Yahweh is portrayed as the King¹¹

- His rule and reign lasts “**forever and ever**”

God's reign is eternal!

- It has no end

For a few moments, let's also look at verses 19-21

- There is a close connection between the Song of Moses and the verses that follow

⁹ Mackay, 272.

¹⁰ Currid, 324.

¹¹ Sarna, 82.

19 For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them; but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea.

Verse 19 is a one-verse summary of what transpired at the Red Sea

- It is a “snapshot” of what God did

It isn't in chronological order

- It is listed in thematic order
- The order builds up to a climax

First, “**the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea**”

- In their pride and self-centeredness, the Egyptians followed Israel into the valley of the Red Sea

But very soon thereafter, God exercised judgment on the mighty nation of Egypt

- This leads us to the second statement

Second, “**the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them**”

- The walls of water that protected Israel are now seen to be the means of judgment on Egypt

Third, “**the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea**”

- This is really the first event, chronologically speaking, of the three events listed here

Church, never stop being amazed at what God did for His people

- He allowed them to walk “**on dry land**”

What was humanly impossible is possible with God

- What was wet was dry

20 And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.

Miriam's name appears only two times in the book of Exodus

- Those two instances are verses 20 and 21 of Exodus 15

Here, she is identified by two descriptions

- We need to look at each one of these

First, she is called, “**the prophetess**”

- She is the first woman given this term in Scripture

There are other women in Scripture who are referred to as prophetess¹²

- Deborah (Judges 4:4)
- Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14)
- Noadiah (Neh 6:14)
- Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3)
- Anna (Lk 2:36)
- The daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9)
- Jezebel (Rev 2:20)

¹² Ronald F. Youngblood, *Everyman's Bible Commentary*, Exodus, 79.

We have some insight into how Miriam viewed herself from Numbers 12¹³

- We read these words, “**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman); and they said, ‘Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?’ And the LORD heard it.**” (12:1-2)

Miriam claimed to have spoken for God

- That would certainly go hand-in-hand with what we know a prophet was

Second, she is referred to as “**Aaron’s sister**”

- Why is she listed as “Aaron’s sister” but not “Moses’ sister” as well?

Aaron is the elder brother (Ex 7:7)

- The older brother held a special place in the family

Miriam was an older lady by this point

- She was the one who rescued Moses from certain death in the Nile River

We know that Moses was 80 and Aaron 83 when they spoke to Pharaoh back in Exodus 7:7

- So Miriam has to be older than 80, if not 90, at this point in her life¹⁴

Miriam is seen to be in some type of leadership position in Israel

- Perhaps she was responsible for leading the women in worship

But we never see her – or any other prophetess – having a regular, ongoing ministry to men and women

- Here in Exodus 15, it is clear that her ministry is for the women

21 And Miriam answered them, “Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea.”

The repetition of verse 1 leads us to think that Miriam may have led the women in some type of antiphonal singing¹⁵

- Perhaps the men would sing a line, then the women would repeat it
- We are not told of all the details

The Song of Moses is a tremendous expression of thanks, praise, and worship

- Not to their human leader, Moses
- But to the LORD

The Song of Moses doesn’t just look back¹⁶

- It also looks ahead

Confidence in what God had done for Israel in the past gave them hope in what God would do in the future

This Song isn’t merely about what God did at the Red Sea

- It teaches us about the overall character of God

¹³ Ibid., 127.

¹⁴ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 185.

¹⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Exodus*, 396.

¹⁶ Mackay, 276.

Even though the Red Sea crossing was a monumental event, it wasn't the only event that showed God's nature and character

This Song is really a summary statement of the greatness of God

- We will see these same truths being displayed in the book of Exodus¹⁷

Very early on in their journey away from Egypt, Israel knew that God was leading them

- Israel knew that God was preparing a place for them

New Covenant believers are assured of the same truth

- Listen to Jesus' words in John 14, “**Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.**’ (14:1-4)
- Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?’
- Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.’” (14:5-6)

As we meander our way on this Earth, let's be encouraged

- God is the Orchestrator, directing our steps
- God is our Lord, telling us what to do
- God is our Shepherd, leading us to trust in Him

Our great purpose in this life should be to glorify God

- To bring fame to His name

In order to worship God, we must have a personal relationship with God

- We must understand our sinfulness
- We must understand our need of a Savior who can deliver us from our desperate situation
- We must embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

The Song of Moses is filled with such language¹⁸

- My God
- My strength
- My song
- My salvation

Can you sing like this?

- Is God your God?

If not, dear friend, you are in a hopeless situation

- But there is hope through Christ
- With God, all things are possible

¹⁷ John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus*, 210.

¹⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word, Exodus*, 411.