

Place: Lurgan Baptist 25:8:2013

Reading: Exodus 15:1-22

MOSES, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

11. SONGS OF PRAISE

In 1792 a group of settlers travelled to Africa. There were more than a thousand of them, all of African descent. Some had worked as slaves on American plantations. Others had served as soldiers in the British Army and then moved north to live in Canada. Together they planned to resettle in what is now Sierra Leone, on land purchased as a Province of Freedom. The settlers were all professing Christians. When they reached Africa they marched ashore singing a hymn by William Hammond (1719-1783) the song was entitled “ *Awake and Sing the Song.* ” One of the verses goes

*Awake and sing the song
Of Moses and the Lamb
Wake every heart and every tongue
To praise the Saviour's name
Sing on your heavenly way
Ye ransomed sinners, sing
Sing on, rejoicing every day
In Christ, the eternal King*

My it was an appropriate hymn to sing. The settlers had been released from captivity, they had crossed the sea, and now they were entering their promised land. So they sang of the prophet Moses who brought Israel out

of Egypt. They also sang to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who had set them free to serve God in a new land. The Lord had done such a great thing for them that it called forth a song of praise. You see, whenever God does something great He deserves to be praised and often this praise comes in the form of a song. ***Did you realise that the Christian faith is a singing faith ?*** In fact, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, you will find songs of praise to God for who He is and what He has done. This first song of Scripture has been called the ***Song of Redemption*** for it proceeded from the hearts of a redeemed people. The Book of Psalms is actually a collection of songs written by David and others. These Psalms became the Jewish hymnbook for their worship services. Throughout the Old Testament we find the people praising the Lord for their redemption and deliverance.

The New Testament also contains a number of hymns of adoration. We think of the song of Mary (Lk 1:46-55) the praise of Zacharias (Lk 1:68-79) the exultation of the angels at the birth of Christ. And of course, in addition, to that we find references indicating the importance of praise in the worship of the early church. *This pattern of praise has continued throughout church history.* Many of the reformers realised the vast potential of music in Christian worship and in the proclamation of the gospel. One of the greatest reforms of Martin Luther was the restoration of congregational singing. Christians are still singing “ *A might fortress is our God,* ” and many other hymns written by Luther. In addition to the revival they began in England, John and Charles Wesley are probably best known for their many

marvellous hymns and gospel songs. The effectiveness of the evangelistic crusades of D.L. Moody was due in part to the powerful singing of Ira Sankey. The Christian faith is indeed a singing faith. Now when we come to (Ch 15) we come to the first recorded song of Scripture. Here is Israel standing on the banks of the Red Sea singing “ *Songs of Praise,*” to the Lord. Incidentally, did you hear about the woman in the choir who was a waterproof soprano ? Nothing could drown out her voice. You see, everyone does not have a great singing voice. But if we are God’s redeemed people, we want to sing. All of us may not have a song in our voice, but we have one in our hearts. (Ps 40:2-3) Now I want to talk to you this about “ *Songs of Praise,*” and the first thing I want you to note is,

(1) THE PERIOD OF THIS SONG

Did you notice how this chapter begins ? “ *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song*” (15:1) Now the Scripture says, “ *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, it is good to sing praises unto God for it is pleasant and praise is comely.*” (Ps 92:1 147:1) But before we can praise the Lord we must first know God, deliverance must be known and enjoyed, salvation must be accomplished and accepted, before a burst of praise can escape a sinner’s lips. Look at,

(a) THE MOMENT SPECIFIED:

“ *Then,*” the word “ *then,*” makes the connection between chapter 14 & chapter 15 between salvation and its song. “ *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel*

this song,” Now what does the “ *then,*” refer to ? It of course refers to the deliverance at the Red Sea. You see, salvation is what put the song into Israel’s heart. As soon as the people were saved, they burst into song. Now what a contrast all this is from what was before. You see, there was no singing in Egypt. When you look at the opening chapters of the book of Exodus, all that you hear is the lash of the oppressor, the cry of the bondman, the groan of the prisoner, but you will hear no singing. In the grip of a cruel tyrant they had neither the desire nor the ability to sing. But now listen, “ *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel.*” When ? Yesterday, they were a multitude of undisciplined bondmen, today they are gloriously free.

They have been sheltered by the blood of the lamb and delivered by the hand of the Lord, and now standing on the sunny banks of resurrection with the smile and favour of heaven resting upon them, they pour out their hearts in joyous thanksgiving. *Their redemption began with a sigh of despair (2:23) but it ends with a song of deliverance. (15:1)* And what had produced this startling change ? *Two things, the blood of the Lamb, and the power of the Lord. (12:13, 13:3)* This song is therefore the song of the saved. Membership in this choir is obtained not by superior vocal capacity, but by a right spiritual condition. But how is that condition reached ? Well, look at the order in (14:31) The order is they “ *saw,*” they “ *believed,*” and then they “ *sang.*” Is this not where praise comes in ? It’s after salvation, and not before it. The prodigal first received his father’s kiss of love then “ *they began to be merry.*” (Lk 15:24) Philip went down to Samaria and preached

Christ, the people believed the Word and there was “*great joy in that city.*” (Acts 8:8) The Ethiopian eunuch in the desert of Gaza believed, was baptised and then went “*on his way rejoicing.*” (Acts 8:39) My the story is the same, and so is the order in every case. Salvation comes first, then comes the song. My can you truthfully take up the language of this song and say, “*He is my God,*” “*He is become my salvation.*” (15:2) Can you say with David, “*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.*” (Ps 18:1) (a)

(b) THE MULTITUDE IDENTIFIED:

1. Look at the Prophet:

“*Then sang Moses*,” though Moses is not specified as the author of this song, nobody doubts it was him that wrote it. I mean Stephen tells us that he was “*mighty in words,*” (Acts 7:22) and that was not only in speech but also in pen, for Moses wrote with brilliance. But where is Moses name in this song of victory ? Obviously it does not appear and that for good reason. You see, Moses has learned that man is but an instrument in the hands of God, a tool that can only function with the permission and power of the Lord. He has now got a proper perspective of himself in relation to God. My have you ? Or could it be that you’re still too strong, too big and too proud for God to use ? 1

2. Look at the People:

“*Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song*

unto the Lord,” (15:1) You see, some scholars feel that this song was sung like this. Someone shouted, “*I will sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously.*” Another rang out, “*The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation.*” Still another group sang, “*He is my God and I will prepare him an habitation my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.*” Whatever, the whole nation joined in the music forming a chorus of millions. The context makes a special point of mentioning the involvement of the women as well, as the men. (15:20-21) My can you imagine what it must have been like ? Two to three million people singing songs of praise to the Lord. The point is, that this song of redemption is for all God’s people. It was not enough for Moses to sing it, or even all the men of Israel. The women had seen the same salvation, and they were trusting in the same Saviour.

My is the whole church not called to offer the same kind of praise to the Lord ? By faith we have stood with the women at the cross, watching the Saviour suffer and die for our sins ? By faith we have looked over the shoulders of the apostles into the empty tomb, where Christ rose again. My Christ has redeemed us. We have been brought out by the blood of the Lamb and the hand of the Lord and now every believer is called to take up the song of redemption. (1)

(2) THE PERSON OF THIS SONG

“*Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord.*” (15:1) But what did they sing about ? What was the theme of this song ? The Lord. You see,

they not only sang unto the Lord, but they sang about the Lord. The word “*Lord*,” occurs no less than 12 times within 18 verses. The pronouns “*He, Him, Thy, Thou, and Thee*,” are found 33 times. This song is all about Jehovah, the glory of His person, and the greatness of His power. It was He that had triumphed gloriously and cast the horse and his rider into the sea. (15:1) It was His right hand that had dashed in pieces the enemy. (15:6) It was because the Lord had blew with the wind that they had sank as lead in the mighty waters. It was in the greatness of His excellency that He had overthrown those who had rose up against Him. (15:7) My is this not true praise ? You see, praise is our preoccupation with God. The late Senator Robert Kennedy visited Brazil, and in the course of his trip was taken into the interior of the country to see some of the tribal situations. He was introduced by interpretation to an Indian who had not long been converted. “*Ask him*,” said the senator to his interpreter, “*what does he enjoy doing most ?*” The Indians reply came as a surprise, “*Being occupied with God.*”

Convinced that the Indian had not understood his question and that the answer should have been something like fishing, or hunting the senator insisted the question be repeated, but the answer came back again, “*being occupied with God.*” This seemingly insignificant Indian, now saved had discovered his chief end in life. What was this song all about ? “*Being occupied with God.*” There is not a word here about self, its doings, its feelings, its sayings. There is not a syllable about what they had done, rather they sang about the Lord. My is this not amazing ?

Challenging ? For how many modern hymns today are full of sentimentality and emotion instead of divine adoration. They recount our experiences instead of His mercies, they tell more of human attainments instead of Christ’s atonement. How different was this song of Moses and Israel, “*I will exalt Him*,” sums it all up. Do you know something ? Hymns ought to be spiritual in their content. Songs that express how we feel, or that dwell simply on the benefits we have derived from being saved, must never displace the hymns that express spiritual truths and doctrines. You see, so many people get their theology from songs rather than from sermons. And much so called “*Christian*,” music conveys bad theology. Many Christian songs today are not based on Scripture.

Instead of teaching Biblical truth, they are deceiving people with their “*false*,” gospel. My a singer has no more ring to sing a lie than a preacher has to preach a lie. For no matter how beautiful a song may be, if it is not teaching Biblical truth, then it has no place in our worship service. Now this song which was sung to the Lord and which was all about the Lord may be divided into parts. Notice, that

(a) *Israel Celebrate what God had done:*

That is, there was *a retrospective aspect* to this song. What God had done. This is summed up in (15:13) They have seen the salvation of the Lord, they have been liberated from Pharaoh’s power, and separated from Pharaoh’s kingdom by the might of Jehovah. And now redeemed and blessed, with the rich spoils of

victory lying everywhere around them, they pour forth the gratitude of their hearts in this magnificent outburst. An old English preacher said, “ *a grateful mind is a great mind.* ” My in light of what God has done are we marked by thanksgiving ? Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) was a Lutheran pastor in the village of Eilenberg, Saxony. He grew up as the son of a poor coppersmith, felt called to the ministry, and after his theological training began his pastoral ministry just as the Thirty Years War was raging through Germany. Floods of refugees streamed into the walled city of Eilenberg. It was the most desperate of times. The Swedish army encompassed the city gates, and inside the walls there was nothing but plague, famine and fear. Eight hundred homes were destroyed, and the people began dying in increasing numbers.

There was a tremendous strain on the pastors, who expended all their strength in preaching the gospel, caring for the sick and dying, and burying the dead. One after another, the pastors themselves took ill and perished until at last only Martin Rinkart was left. *Some days he conducted as many as fifty funerals.* Finally, the Swedes demanded a high ransom. It was Martin Rinkart who left the safety of the city to negotiate with the enemy, and he did it with such courage and faith that there was soon a conclusion of hostilities, and the period of suffering ended. Rinkart, knowing there is no healing without thanksgiving composed this hymn for the survivors of Eilenberg. It has been sung around the world ever since.

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous thing's hath done
In whom this world rejoices
Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today*

My as we look backward, are we truly thankful for what the Lord has done ? Or are we like the nine leprosy men who refused to give thanks to the One who had healed them ? (a)

(b) Israel Anticipate what God will do:

That is, there was a Prospective aspect to this song. What God will do. Look if you will at (15:17) The first aspect speaks of grace, the second aspect speaks of glory. They praised God for the past, stood on the further side of the Red Sea, beneath a cloudless heaven, and rejoiced in anticipation of the glorious future which lay just ahead of them. The spiritual counterpart of this is found in (Rom 5:1-2) Do you recall what Paul says ? “ *Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* ” Peace for the past, grace for the present, and glory for the future. Or to put it another way, we have peace to begin with, grace to go on with, and glory to end with. For surely the Lord will bring us in. (Jn 14:1-3) Is it not wonderful to know that those

whom He has led forth He will infallibly lead in ?
Those whom He justifies, these He also glorifies.
(Rom 8:30) My what a song this is. What God has
done, what God will do. Do you see that this hymn is
theo-centric ? It is thoroughly God-centred. My
Moses gave all the glory to God. He did not say one
single word about his role in Israel's salvation. It was
all about the Lord. They could sing, " *To God be the
glory great things He hath done.*" (1) (2)

(3) THE PURPOSE OF THIS SONG

What practical use can we glean from this song ? Well,
these songs of praise should stir us,

(a) TO ADORATION:

C.H. Spurgeon said, " *May God the Holy Ghost who
delivered this prayer to Moses, now write it afresh upon
his people's hearts. Breathe on us Holy Spirit that we
also may be filled with the praises of Jehovah.*"

My do we know anything of this kind of worship ?
The English word " *worship,*" comes from " *worth-
ship,*" and that word simply means to attribute to
someone worth, status, value. To worship God is to
willingly acknowledge His worth, His status, His
greatness, and His glory. To worship God is to be
overwhelmed by our consciousness of who God is. I
mean do you see what they say in (15:11) " *Who is
like unto Thee O Lord, among the gods ? Who is like
Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing
wonders ?*" My when you come to worship are you
overwhelmed by your consciousness of who God is ?

John Wesley conducted an open air service in a little
village in Cornwall over 200 years ago and wrote, " *I
preached Christ our wisdom and righteousness and
sanctification. I could not conclude till it was so dark
that we could scarce see one another. And there was on
all sides the deepest attention, none speaking, stirring
or scarce looking aside. Surely here was God
worshipped in the beauty of holiness.*" My do we
not need a new sense of worship where conversation is
replaced by contemplation ? Where familiarity is
replaced by reverence ? Where an awareness of each
other is replaced by an awareness of God ?

(b) TO APPRECIATION:

An appreciation of who God is. My what's your
concept of God ? Do you look upon Him as some
feeble, weak, disappointed, defeated deity who is the
object of worship in many churches, or do you look
upon God the way Israel looked upon Him ? For here is
a song that magnifies God and His attributes. It's a song
that speaks about,

1. The Power of God:

" *Thy right hand O Lord is become glorious in power.*"
(15:6) The right hand of God is representative of His
omnipotence. Glorious in power ! *Casting power* in
(15:4) *Covering power* in (15:5) *Conquering power*
in (15:6) *Consuming power* in (15:7) *Congeaing
power* in (15:8) Do you need to be reminded of His
power this ?

2. The Pre-eminence of God:

This song asks the question “ *Who is like unto thee O Lord among the gods ?* ” (15:11) Egypt had a multitude of gods but Jehovah was superior to all of them. Why God had just destroyed the Egyptians and delivered Israel at the Red Sea why ? “ *That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.* ” (14:4)

**Before Jehovah’s awful throne
Ye nations bow with sacred joy
Know that the Lord is God alone
He can create and He destroy**

3. The Purity of God:

The words “ *glorious in holiness,* ” reveal that at the centre of all God’s attributes is this great attribute. “ *It is the glory,* ” said Stephen Charnock “ *of every perfection in the Godhead.* ” Thomas Watson said, “ *holiness is the most sparkling jewel of His crown.* ” Do you need to pause this and see your God ? The power of God, the pre-eminence of God, and the purity of God ? (a) (b)

(c) TO ANTICIPATION:

For our future, that is the eternity of the believer will be an eternity in which we shall sing unto the Lord, and in which we shall sing about the Lord. Do you know what we are going to sing about ? ? It will go something like this, “ *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.* ” (Rev 5:9, 12,

15:3) Do you know what we are going to sing ? “ *Alleluia,* (which is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Hallelujah* which means *praise the Lord,*) “ *Alleluia for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* ” (Rev 19:6) Did you notice that this is how this song of praise ends ? They sing, “ *For the Lord shall reign for ever and ever.* ” (15:18) Could anything be more majestic than that ? God is supreme. He is the Lord God omnipotent. The Psalmist wrote, “ *The Lord reigneth let the earth rejoice let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.* ” (Ps 97:1) My is it not encouraging to know that in a world gone mad God is still on the throne ? Is it not wonderful to know that in a society that despises God, God is still running the show ? Is it not reassuring to know that amidst the crumbling kingdoms of this world, His kingdom shall stand, “ *For He must reign.* ” (1 Cor 15:25) “ *And He shall reign for ever and ever.* ”

An old Christian went to hear Handel’s “*Messiah,*” at the Royal Albert Hall in London. As they sang the “*Hallelujah Chorus,*” tears streamed down his face. Those around noticed this and turned to see if he was alright. He said simply, “*That’s my Saviour they’re singing about.*” Do you realise that when you read this “*Song of Praise,*” that’s your Saviour and Lord they are singing about. “ *For the Lord shall reign for ever and ever.* ” (15:18) Is He reigning in your life ?

***Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall
Join in the everlasting song
And crown Him Lord of all***

