

Ministry of Grace Church

Exodus 15 – Speaker Notes

Last time we were together we looked at chapter 14 of Exodus. There we saw how *Yahweh*, in a pillar of cloud, led the children of Israel to Pi Hahiroth where they became trapped by the Egyptian army closing in from the north. On the surface, it appeared that *Yahweh* was not a very good guide for the Israelites. But, as often is the case, looks can be deceiving when God is at work. The Israelites cried out in fear to *Yahweh* and accused Moses of bringing them out into the wilderness to have them killed. Moses also cried out to *Yahweh*, but he cried out in faith, and he told the children of Israel that all they had to do was stand still and they would see *Yahweh* fight for them and eliminate the Egyptians.

Even though Moses cried out in faith to *Yahweh*, he had apparently forgotten God's message that he was supposed to follow the pillar of cloud. In responding to Moses' cry for help, *Yahweh* told him to lift his staff over the Red Sea and the water would part. Then the pillar of cloud moved from in front of the Israelites to behind them, preventing the Egyptian forces from coming near them. When Moses lifted up his staff, the waters were parted, and the Israelites walked through on dry ground.

As soon as the children of Israel were across, the pillar of cloud allowed the Egyptians to advance, and God encouraged them to chase the Israelites. As a result, the choicest chariots of Egypt got stuck in the middle because *Yahweh* removed their wheels and then released the waters, causing all the Egyptians to be killed, while the Israelites watched from the far side.

This was truly the most miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel in all of history. As we now look into chapter 15, we will learn about the praise service that the children of Israel celebrated, and we will begin to see their march through the wilderness and how *Yahweh* provided for them whenever they needed it.

Exodus 15:1

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Remember, whenever you see the word LORD or GOD (all caps) in the Old Testament, it is the word *Yahweh*. This is a song that was sung to *Yahweh*. It is a declaration of *Yahweh's* victory over sin, Satan, and his world system. It is a song of salvation, that is, a song of *Yahweh's* salvation of His people. It will be sung again during the Great Tribulation, in God's throne room just before the seven last judgments (the bowl judgments) are poured out:

In this song, not only have the chariots and horses of the Egyptians been destroyed, but the drivers and the warriors with them have been destroyed. In symbolism and typology, this can be seen as a picture of Satan and the world system. The world is the chariot, and its rider is Satan, ever driving it onward in battle against God and His children. Pharaoh and his army can also be seen as the law and sin to which we have been enslaved, but which God has cast into the sea. This may be what inspired Micah to write:

... You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

The song goes on to say:

Exodus 15:2-3

The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.

Think about this: against the Egyptians the Israelites had no ability to fight, nor did they have the weapons with which to fight. They also had no power against the sea. So, dividing the waters and destroying the Egyptians were completely God's doing. All the children of Israel had to do was believe, and in faith walk between the mighty walls of water. Let me say it again, dividing the waters, allowing the Israelites to travel to safety and destroying the Egyptians when the waters returned were all *Yahweh's* doing! The Israelites simply believed and acted in obedience based on that faith. God was their strength, just as He is ours. And he who has God as his strength will also have Him as his song. Resting in the arms of the Almighty, Eternal God produces a great sense of peace and joy that will naturally express itself in song.

Here's a little nugget that most people miss: the children of Israel sang, "He has become my salvation." The word translated "salvation" is *yeshuah*. This is the Hebrew name Joshua, or it's Greek equivalent *Isous*, that is, Jesus.

They also referred to him as, "My father's God." This is from the Hebrew *Elohey abi* which could be translated, "God is my father." They called *Yahweh*, "a man of war." This could be translated as "the man of battle," or even "the hero of the battle." This attribute of God is especially noteworthy here because the Israelites had no part in the battle that destroyed the Egyptians.

Putting these all together, we could translate **Exodus 15:2** as:

Yahweh is my strength and song, and He has become my Jesus; He is my God, and I will praise Him; God my Father, and I will exalt Him. *Yahweh* is the hero of the battle; *Yahweh* is His name.

This was clearly true for the Israelites who walked through the parted sea. It is even more so for any Christian who recognizes the majesty and power of our Father and His Son, our Savior, Jesus!

Exodus 15:4-5

Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone.

You may recall from our study of chapter 14 that the word "officers" refers to the third man added to each of the chariots. There are existing Egyptian monuments which depict warriors in chariots with heavy coats of mail. The armor of the officers is reported to have been plates of highly tempered bronze, with sleeves reaching nearly to the elbow, covering the body and the thighs nearly to the knee. It's no wonder that they sank to the bottom like a stone.

Exodus 15:6-8

Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

The right hand (the right side) represents a position of power and authority. A king who sits a person at his right side is proclaiming this person to be equal with the king in power and authority. This will be the position of Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the godhead.

David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.”” (Mark 12:36)

Here we see a picture of the majesty of our God and Father. His majesty is so great that, by itself, it destroyed his enemies. His majesty was turned into His fury. The word translated “fury” could just as well have been translated “burning anger.” It is this burning anger of our loving God that will turn His enemies into stubble.

Exodus 15:9-10

The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.’ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

The repeated use of the expression, I will, is very reminiscent of the arrogance of Satan (Lucifer):

How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘**I will** ascend to heaven; above the stars of God **I will** set my throne on high; **I will** sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will** make myself like the Most High.’ (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Notice the dramatic contrast between Pharaoh’s wordy, exuberant, boastful claims of what he was going to do compared to the simplicity of what God actually did without boasting (You blew ... the sea covered them ... they sank).

Exodus 15:11-13

“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

This is not a proclamation that there are many Gods. Rather it is a statement of those who have just come out of polytheistic Egypt where there were many gods to whom and of whom great monuments had been erected. It is interesting to note the efforts that worshippers of false gods go to in order to try to show the greatness of their gods. In contrast, our God does not want great monuments made in His honor. Instead, he wants our hearts devoted to him. Also, throughout the book of Revelation, Satan, is represented as a ferocious dragon and his minions are repeatedly portrayed as great beasts. Compare these with Christ, the Almighty God, the Judge of all the earth who is represented as a tiny little lambkin.

In this song, *Yahweh* is not seen as a tiny little lamb. Instead, He is said to be: majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders.

There is another word that I want to look at in this passage. It is the word translated, “redeemed” This is the Hebrew word *ge’uliyim*, meaning “to act as a kinsman-redeemer, buying back a kinsman’s possessions.” To get a better understanding of the kinsman redeemer idea, read through the book of Ruth. There we see Boaz as the kinsman redeemer who purchased Ruth to be his.

In the New Testament, Paul tells us in Galatians:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)

Finally, in this section of the Song of Moses they sang that *Yahweh* had guided them throughout this ordeal. The Egyptians had believed that the children of Israel had been lost and “closed-in by the wilderness,” but God had led them in a specific direction, to a specific location where He could accomplish two specific things, the salvation of His people and the destruction of His enemies. From there He guided them through the parted waters, through the wilderness, and eventually into the Promised Land.

This same God guides every Christian through this earthly life if we only let Him and listen to His voice.

Exodus 15:14-18

The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The LORD will reign forever and ever.”

Verses fourteen through eighteen represent a prophetic portion of this song. They describe what the reaction of the peoples of the land will be when they hear about what *Yahweh* had done. Indeed, the inhabitants of the Promised Land did become afraid of the children of Israel and their God. Several of these peoples are named specifically here in the song of Moses: “Edom” (descents of Esau) and “Moab” (descendants of Lot) would later fear the children of Israel but let them pass peacefully through their land. Then, the Israelites would encounter the Ammonites (also descendants of Lot) who would refuse to let them pass through their land and *Yahweh* would cause Israel to be victorious over Ammon, thus putting even more fear in the hearts of the Canaanites.

Exodus 15:19

For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea.

This verse does not appear to be a part of the Song of Moses. Rather, as a brief summary, it serves to transition from the song back to the historical narrative.

Exodus 15:20-21

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.”

Calling Miriam a prophetess may be a reference to her as a seer, but it is more likely a reference to her musical ability and the use of song to proclaim a message. Musicians are frequently described as prophets in the Old Testament. For instance, when David set-up his kingdom, he set aside a select group of men to “prophesy” in music:

David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals. ...
(1 Chronicles 25:1)

Keep in mind that a prophet is a person through whom *Yahweh* speaks. Their message does not have to be a prediction of the future, although it frequently is. Miriam took a “tambourine” (some translations say “timbrel”) to use as she sang. This refers to “a small, shallow, single-headed hand drum, or tambourine.” The Egyptians were known for having used these in their religious celebrations and likely gave these to the children of Israel when they knew that they were going out to have a celebration to Jehovah.

Exodus 15:22-23

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore, it was named Marah.

Now we get back to the narrative of the travels of the Israelites. After having hiked three days in the wilderness of Shur, they finally came to a place with water, but it was bitter and they couldn’t drink it. The Hebrew word for bitter is *marah*. Because the water was bitter, they called the place “bitterness.” Imagine the frustration of the Israelites who had miraculously walked through the parted waters of the Red Sea, then headed away from that water into the wilderness. Now, after three days of hiking through the desert-like wasteland, they finally find a place with water. Their thirst must have been agonizing. But – as soon as they tasted the water they spit it out because it was undrinkable.

Can’t you just hear them yelling, “Moses, what have you done to us?!”

Exodus 15:24-26

And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.”

These children of Israel had grown up as slaves in Egypt where what little they ate or drank was brought to them. When they tasted the water at Marah it was bitter, so they complained to their leader, Moses.

As we have mentioned previously, the children of Israel were quick to praise *Yahweh* for His miracles, but their memories were exceedingly short. Even though it had only been three days since the most miraculous deliverance of any people in the history of the earth, they were quick to complain. Had they already forgotten what *Yahweh* had done?

Moses, on the other hand, responded to the complaints of the children of Israel by crying out to God for help. In response to his prayer, God showed Moses a tree to throw into the waters. Do any of you know of a tree that when thrown into brackish, undrinkable water will purify it and make it drinkable? There is no evidence of any tree that will do this, but that's no problem for our God.

We see here, instead, how *Yahweh* miraculously sweetened the water in response to Moses' faith and obedience. It is possible to see in this tree a type of the cross on which our Savior shed His blood to make us sweet in the eyes of God. It is also possible to see in this tree a type of the tree of life which is for the healing of the nations.

Yahweh then told the Israelites that if they would submit to His rule and follow his instructions, He would protect them from diseases. This is not to imply that God's blessings are based on obedience any more than that obedience to the Law can save us. If the acts of obedience are based on faith, however, God will provide and protect.

He then refers to Himself as "the LORD, your healer" These are the Hebrew words *Yahweh rapha*. The word *rapha* means "to mend, stitch, or heal." This is one of many monikers that God gives himself. It refers to both physical healing and spiritual healing (forgiveness of sins).

Exodus 15:27

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

Having provided a way to sweeten the waters at Marah, Yahweh now leads the children of Israel to a place some ten miles or so to the south where there was abundant sweet water and palm trees offering some shade for the weary travelers. The water source is referred to as "springs" This comes from the Hebrew word '*ayin*, meaning "a spring, or a fountain." It implies that these were natural springs of water rather than wells which someone had dug. This is another example of *Yahweh* providing for His people instead of them having to rely on what man can do.

It was here at the springs and palm trees that the people "encamped." This is the first location of which it is said that they set-up camp. There was an abundance of water and shade there and they had been travelling for more than a week since leaving the land of Goshen. Therefore, encamping and resting for awhile was a welcomed event.

So What?

To believe or not to believe, that is the real question!

Once again, here we see how quickly the children of Israel were to sing praises to *Yahweh* when he rescued them. We also see that they were just as quick to complain when things did not meet their expectations. How little mankind has changed since then. We Christians are particularly prone to such responses. When we are blessed, we feel like singing praises to Him. But when times get difficult, we are quick to complain.

For the children of Israel, *Yahweh* used such trials to test (and strengthen) their faith in Him. Consider this. They had recently experienced the ten judgmental plagues on Egypt and had seen how *Yahweh* protected them when they were faithfully obedient by sprinkling the blood of the lamb on their doorways. Then, after having been freed from bondage (just as He had promised them) finding themselves trapped at Pi-Hahiroth with the Egyptian army closing in on them, they began to cry out to *Yahweh* and complain to Moses. This is to be expected of those who are new (and weak) in the faith. Fortunately, despite their own lack of faith, Moses was strong in faith and God responded to his obedience by providing perhaps the most spectacular miracle revealed in the entire Old Testament.

Then, having seen the hand of *Yahweh* save them and destroy their enemies through the parting and returning of the waters of the Red Sea, the children of Israel were full of song and praise to *Yahweh*. Yet, their memory seemed to be short with regard to God's protection. Now, having travelled three days in the wilderness, apparently without adequate supplies of water, they arrive at Marah where there is water. Much to their disappointment, however, they find that the water is undrinkably bitter. Remember, it's been just over three days since God parted the waters of the Red Sea to save them. But now, rather than recall how God had provided and protected them thus far, they forgot about his care for them. Instead of falling to their knees with humble request to their Almighty God, they raised their voices in complaint to Moses saying, "What are we to drink?" Didn't they yet know that *Yahweh* was not only able, but desirous of meeting their needs?

In the events that follow, we see another aspect of our loving God. He doesn't just meet our needs; He often exceeds our needs. He purified the waters of Marah for the Israelites, then led them onward to a place of abundant water. Now, perhaps there were some who wanted to stay at Marah because a little water was better than none at all. We are not told that this is the case, but it seems reasonable that there were some who thought they should stay put. It's particularly possible given that this was a mixed multitude. Would some of these continue to resist Moses' leadership, believing they knew better? Would they foment discontent among the others? Or would they begin to see how *Yahweh* was caring for them all as He led them through their wilderness travels?

In the coming chapters of Exodus, we will see time and time again how the children of Israel are so focused on themselves that they readily forget about all of God's tender mercies and miraculous provisions for them. Sound familiar? We will see them complain about the lack of meat and God will give them all the meat they can eat. He will also provide them with manna for the remainder of the days of their wilderness wanderings. Yet, they will soon complain about the bread from heaven. When once again faced with a lack of water, they will complain yet again, but God (through Moses) will give them water from the rock, not once, but twice. Yet their complaining continues.

Is that how your Christian life seems to be? Do you praise God when He provides good things for you? And when things get tough, do you complain and ask, “Why God?” What does God expect from us? Better yet, what does He *desire* from us? Ask Job. He endured more suffering than any of us, and yet his faith remained strong. Even in the face of his best friends telling him to curse God and get on with life, Job remained steadfast and faithful. And, in the end, even though God chastened him, it was his faith that God rewarded, restoring to him all that had been taken away.

It’s easy to proclaim your faith in God when things are going well. What God wants is for us to demonstrate our faith in the face of trials and difficulties. When life seems to be going sour on all sides, can you lift your face, and voice, to God and say, “Thanks, God for loving me and being here with me in the midst of this mess? Show me the way forward, Father. Lead the way, and I will follow with a song in my heart and Your praise on my lips!”

The next time you encounter trials and disappointment, remember what it says in Proverbs:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

Remember, acknowledge means “to become intimately and experientially familiar with God. And - the more we know about God, the more experiences we have with Him, the easier it becomes to believe, and trust in Him.

I challenge you to take some time this week to read through chapters eleven and twelve of the book of Hebrews. Pay special attention to what it is about all these people that pleased God. Then, having read both chapters, return to **Hebrews 11:6** and commit it to memory:

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Do you want God to reward you? Then, draw near to Him, diligently seek Him and in all you do develop an intimate, experiential relationship with Him. Exercise your faith from your knees and see it grow.

God will be pleased!

And you will be blessed!

Let’s pray.