

The Song of Salvation

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Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 0 0] what songs are you listening to when you go for a run perhaps, when you are in the car or when you're cleaning the house? What songs are you listening to and what are you singing? Because songs can be powerful things. I heard that Taylor Swift at her Detroit concert last week was wiping away tears from her eyes as she performed an emotional song about loss. I wasn't at that concert, I just heard that that was her response to one of her songs. But I was at a concert last night actually, both our boys were playing in it and there were a couple of people who were up singing and it is clear from the person singing and from those listening that there is a power in singing and in song. It touches upon our heartstrings, it moves us in certain ways because songs can express pain, sadness as well as joy and happiness. We sing songs perhaps to reflect our mood. We might even sing songs in order to change our moods and that might be personally or it might be as a big group and so the question I'd like to ask is what is it that you have got to sing about? Perhaps right now you're singing for joy, you're happy, life is going well, you've had the birth of a new baby into your family, lots of good things or maybe you're singing the blues right now. Life isn't so good, there's been loss, there's been bereavement, there's difficulty, there's trouble and so whether you call yourself a Christian today or not, Exodus chapter 15 that was just read for us tells us about something that is worth singing about because it celebrates God saving his people Israel. We're looking at the book of Exodus and it is the story of God delivering his people from their slavery in Egypt and leading them on towards the promised land and so what we've got here in Exodus chapter 15 is the song of salvation, the song of their salvation and it could be described as Israel's national anthem because it reflects this pivotal moment in their history because slaves being set free through God defeating their enemies was something that they wanted to sing about and so Moses in this chapter leads the people in praising God for all that he has done for them but as we tune into this song in Exodus chapter 15 what we hear if we listen closely enough is the sound of the bigger story of God's great salvation plan, a story that the whole Bible tells us about and so this Exodus song is a beautiful sound in the symphony of the Bible story because when you have experienced God's salvation as the people of Israel had then you've got something to sing about and you want to sing about it and so three things this song tells us to look back to what God has done tells us to look up to what God is like and tells us to look forward to what God will do so first of all let's look back to what God has done and this is verse 1 to 12 of chapter 15. Most of the song looks back to what God has done for his people so and this song to the

Lord and it's as if it's as if Moses is like the choir master and he leads the Israelites in singing to the Lord and so this in a sense is their spontaneous their joyful response to the God who saved them and the song gets its debut here at this part of the Bible but then it's replayed elsewhere in the Old Testament and it's even sung by God's people in heaven at the end of the Bible in Revelation and so it's a song that is addressed to God and it's a song that is about God and so after we have read the prose account of God rescuing his people through the Red Sea crossing in Exodus chapter 13 and 14 we now get a poetic account of the same Red Sea crossing here in Exodus chapter 15 and so it is a song about what God has done well what has God done for his people that makes them want to sing with joy and praise to God well if you know the story of the Israelites they had been slaves in Egypt for over 400 years and they were held captive they were suffering at the hands of the Egyptians but God had a covenant with their forefathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob and included in God's promise to Abraham was that he said that his descendants would be strangers in another land and they would be enslaved and ill-treated for 400 years but in God's promise he said that he would punish the nation that enslaved them and he would set them free and bless them and so here we see that God is faithful to his promise and he chose Moses to be the leader of his people and then he sent his judgment through the plagues on Egypt which we looked at a few weeks ago God hardened you remember Pharaoh's heart but Pharaoh eventually let God's people go and then God redeemed them through the Passover and then over 600,000 Israelites marched out of Egypt

God led them to the Red Sea where they were hunted down by the Egyptians they were trapped between the army and the sea and God saved them by opening up the sea the Red Sea for them to cross over but of course the Egyptians followed them into the sea and then God closed the sea over the Egyptians and none of the Egyptian army survived and so what this song is is essentially a graphic retelling of the exodus that God had accomplished for his people and so it begins there in verse 1 I will sing to the Lord for he is highly exalted both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea so the focus is on the Lord smashing Israel's enemies and that is the constant refrain of the song if you pick that up when it was read but why this emphasis on God defeating their enemies well there would be no salvation for the Israelites otherwise and so their song is not just about God bringing them through the sea their song is about God destroying their enemies in the sea in fact this is the first time that Israel explicitly acknowledges the Lord as their God verse 2 the Lord is my my strength and my song he has become my salvation he is my God and I will praise him my father's God and I will exalt him God saved them because they were his people and they responded by saying that God was their

God and so they praise him as my father's God because of God's covenant with their forefathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob and so they're looking back to what God has done not just in the crossing of the Red Sea but to God's covenant with his people and so they could only be saved not by running away from their enemies who caught up with them the first time they escaped but by the sound defeat of their enemies and that's why the psalm describes God as God as a warrior in verse 3 the Lord is a warrior the Lord is his name it's saying to us that God is the divine warrior who fights for his people because his people's enemies are his enemies and so his objective is their defeat and the song graphically describes this so the second half of verse 1 we read both horse and driver he is hurled into the sea then verse 4 to 5 pharaoh's chariots and his army he is hurled into the sea the best of pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea the deep waters have covered them they sank to the depths like a stone the end of verse 6 your right hand Lord shattered the enemy verse 7 and the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you you unleashed your burning anger it consumed them like stubble verse 10 but you blew with your breath and the sea covered them they sank like lead in the mighty waters then verse 12 you stretched out your right hand and the earth swallows your enemies see how God is described as this divine warrior who saves his people by crushing their enemies and so what better for those who have been saved by the Lord than to express their gratitude for this victory than sing to him in song in joyful praise and yet it doesn't stop at singing because the singing is accompanied we read in verse 20 to 21 and so Miriam continues the praise that Moses began repeating what God has done for his people and it's a joyful celebration with singing with music and with dance and so all the people are singing of God's salvation with one voice as when Miriam said sing to the Lord this wasn't some kind of option well sing along if you want to no this was a command it wasn't joining if you feel like it no this was open your mouth and sing because of all that God has done for you you've got something fantastic to sing about the Lord has saved you and so this wasn't just a one-off sing the song of salvation has got this liturgical function it had to be on repeat as God's people continued to celebrate their deliverance to look back to what God had done and to keep singing to God and giving him praise for their rescue for their salvation and so singing was a reminder of the miracle that God had done and performed for his people because if you see they were to be truly saved then their enemies would have to be completely wiped out because they were God's enemies too and so as the divine warrior he had won victory over them

and as God his people share in his victory and so this was a holy war in the truest sense of the term and so the natural response of those who'd been saved was to burst into song and so shouldn't that be our natural response too because if we have experienced the Lord's salvation in Jesus Christ then shouldn't we want to automatically instantly spontaneously praise God for what he's done for us so I wonder what your response is as you look back to your past life and see what God has done for you how he has saved you if you're a Christian and also what he has saved you from because his salvation means that he has been the divine warrior who has fought for us and who has defeated our enemies our enemies of Satan and sin and death because becoming a Christian isn't about turning over a new leaf it isn't about picking up some new habits isn't about trying a different kind of lifestyle to see if it works for you no Christianity is about saving us from the desperate situation that we're in we're dead in our transgressions and sins and we're deserving of God's wrath and we're enslaved until Jesus sets us free and so what we see here is if we have been saved then we'll want to sing about it we want to give God the glory for the great things he has done the great things he has done for us because if we don't have this desire in our hearts perhaps it's because we've never really experienced God's salvation personally if there's no desire within to praise him for what he's done then the question is well are we really saved in the first place so that's the first thing we see here looking back to what God has done second thing is looking up to what God is like we said before that the book of Exodus reveals God to us that is part of its purpose it reveals God through what God says and through what God does whether it's at the burning bush or whether it is in the plagues or at the Passover or in the parting of the Red Sea and so the song here is about God and about what he's like now when Moses sang this song along with the people there's no attempt here to give some kind of exhaustive description of God but in responding to God

[14:17] Moses and the people can't help but sing of God's attributes and so verse 2 the Lord is my strength and my defense he has become my salvation he is my God and I will praise him my father's God and I will exalt him you notice that Moses called God the Lord and the word Lord all capital letters L-O-R-D in our Bibles it's the word that refers to God's covenant name so in Hebrew it's for consonants Y-H-W-H and it's the name Yahweh and it's the name that God revealed to Moses way back at the burning bush and it's his covenant name that emphasizes that God enters into a relationship with his people and that's why Moses addresses God in this way and he praises God not just because he is the personal God but he praises God for his power because his power is emphasized all the way through the song in this dramatic and graphic language so verse 6 your right hand Lord was majestic in power so the Lord's right hand is a symbol of his power and his strength then verse 8 by the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up the surging waters stood up like a wall the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea so describing the wind as God's nostril blast emphasizes just how powerful God is the best I can do with my nostrils is blow my nose even then it isn't sometimes very successful and yet what we're told here is that God effortlessly piled up the waters of the Red Sea like a wall so his people could walk through and then how God brought down these walls of water crashing back down how did he do it?

verse 10 but you blew with your breath and the sea covered them and then again verse 12 you stretch out your right hand and the earth swallows your enemies what the song is saying is that God God has the whole of creation at his disposal so the wind and the sea and the earth can do exactly what God wants them to do all of them serve him and that's why Moses praises God for his power and he also praises God for his anger did you see that in verse 7 and the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who oppose you you unleashed your burning anger it consumed them like stubble now it might seem strange to praise God for his anger or for his wrath because many people just don't like to think of God as being angry a personal God?

yep take a personal God powerful God? yep take a powerful God an angry God? no not so sure about an angry God but because God is just then he must be angry at all sin and all evil God cannot tolerate evil as if it's acceptable and so God dealt justly with the Egyptians verse 9 the enemy boasted I will pursue I will overtake them I will divide the spoils I will gorge myself on them I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them so it's not as if the Egyptians are good guys they're not described in that way at all and if you've read Exodus they're evil and wicked and greedy and abusive and arrogant downright evil they wanted to destroy God's people and they continually resisted God and so we should be in no doubt whatsoever that God gave the Egyptians what they deserved because God's anger unlike ours is always righteous it's always just and that should make us glad that nothing will pass God by nothing will be unaccounted for when it comes to God's justice what kind of God would he be if he turned a blind eye to all the sin and the evil in the world that causes so much suffering and so Moses praises God for his anger and then Moses praises God for his supremacy verse 11 who among the gods is like you Lord and it's a rhetorical question who among the gods is like you Lord and the answer of course is no one because he is the supreme lord of all supreme over all false gods like those of Egypt he is the Lord he is the one true and living God so he alone is infinite eternal and comparable he alone is majestic in holiness he alone is awesome in glory he alone works wonders and he proved all of this by the plagues and by the parting of the Red Sea and so Moses praises God for his supremacy and then he praises God for his love verse 13 in your unfeeling love you will lead the people you have redeemed in your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling now the unfeeling love that Moses speaks of here is God's covenant love for his people and the word translates the Hebrew word hesed it's love that is steadfast loyal devoted faithful and it's love that has been proven to the Israelites again and again and again from God's covenant promise to Abraham through to their salvation from slavery in Egypt

God has been loving and faithful and devoted to his people and so in all that Moses and the Israelites sang they looked up to what God is like and that's just as crucial for us today because there is so much confusion and so much uncertainty around about what God is really like even within the church and just as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were confused as to God's identity his character his attributes so people can be so confused today because we only know what God is like on the basis of what God has revealed to us he is able to communicate himself to us in a way that we can understand and so that's why Moses and the Israelites sing as they do because the Exodus displayed and revealed God's character and his attributes his nature and he is an awesome God one who is powerful and we can praise God for his supremacy because he is the one true and living God who alone is worthy of our worship all other gods are false and if we trust in them then they will fail us and we can praise God for his love because he is absolutely committed to his people forever now with a boy who's applied to study at university this year he and all of his friends know all about conditional offers and unconditional offers because there's a difference and yet God's love for us is not conditional on us as human beings satisfaction identity freedom justice meaning and hope comes from knowing this God who has revealed himself to us in the Exodus and in the Bible in himself this God is all we could ever need and he meets the deepest desires of our hearts for all that we could ever want and that's why he is so worthy of our praise and that's the second thing look up to what God is like first look back to what God has done second look up to what God is like and third look forward to what God will do from verse 13 through to 17 the song really anticipates

Israel's future so verse 13 again in your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed in your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling saying that God hasn't finished with his people yet God's purpose for his people wasn't just to deliver them from their slavery his purpose was to dwell with them and so his dwelling here is called holy because he is holy and his goal is to take his redeemed people to live with him for them to be in relationship with him and so he's leading them out of Egypt and on towards the promised land and in doing so he would continue to give them victory over their enemies and we see this in verse 14 to 16 so the nations will hear and tremble anguish will grip the people of Philistia the chiefs of Edom will be terrified the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling the people of Canaan will melt away terror and dread will fall on them by the power of your arm they will be still as a stone until your people pass by Lord until the people you bought pass by and so what they're singing about is something that's going to happen in the future which actually became a reality and it's all recorded for us in the book of Joshua of how God defeats all of these enemies and brings his people safely to his dwelling which is what verse 17 speaks of you will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance the place Lord you made for your dwelling the sanctuary Lord your hands established verse 17 of chapter 15 is a verse that essentially summarizes the goal of Exodus and it's like a gateway as it were for all the action that will come in the rest of the book so God had delivered his people next they'll hear what God demands of them in the Ten Commandments and they will look forward to

[25 : 01] God dwelling with them and so they'll wander through the desert but the next stop will be Mount Sinai Exodus chapter 19 where they'll get the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20 and so verse 17 there could refer to Mount Sinai but it's more likely speaking of Mount Zion the city of God in Jerusalem because that's where the temple would be and the temple would be where God would make his earthly dwelling that would be the place of his sanctuary where he would be with his people and so Moses and Israel praise God confident that God will do everything that he has promised and so these promises were fulfilled but of course the song only speaks of a partial fulfillment and yet it points to a future fulfillment way beyond Israel which we get a hint of in verse 18 that says the Lord reigns forever and ever and the song essentially concludes with the Lord reigns forever and ever and it does that for a reason because while this is an old song its lyrics never date like most songs they date and they don't stand the test of time but this one does because the exodus you see is not just the story of the people of Israel it is part of our story as the people of God it is a story with God at the center and with his salvation as the purpose and so that's why these lyrics apply to us because it tells us that history is going somewhere and this world does have meaning which is of course the opposite of what our atheist friends would conclude because if they believe that the world came from nowhere then it's going nowhere and it means nothing but the Bible tells us that the world was created by a personal

God who reigns who is just and who is loving and whose purposes are good and so the Bible forces us all to look beyond ourselves and our own tiny universe because we are not the center of everything as much as we sometimes like to think we are God is at the center it is all about him it is not about us it is about who he is it is about what he has done and it is about what he will do and we need to be reminded of this every single day so we stop navel gazing and thinking that all that is going on has to do with me and my life and my family we need to see the broader horizon and bigger perspective so that our lives and our lips are taken up with the God who saves because this song of salvation points towards

God's ultimate plan of salvation when all of God's promises for this world will be fulfilled and that's why this song gets repeated on the Bible's playlist of songs because the song of Moses is picked up in Revelation the last book of the Bible in Revelation chapter 15 the apostle John's vision of heaven what he sees and what he hears are people singing the song of Moses and is being accompanied by the song of the Lamb and so Revelation 15 verse 2 we read and I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire a sea a sea where have we read of the sea before standing beside the sea those who had been victorious over the beast where have we heard of a victory before in Exodus been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name they held harps given them by God and sang the song of God's servant

Moses and of the Lamb great and marvelous are your deeds Lord God Almighty just and true are your ways King of the nations who will not fear you 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 Revelation chapter 15 verse 2 to 4 that's the song of Moses God's servant and the song of the Lamb the Lord Jesus Christ and they combine beautifully as the remixed song of salvation so in the first Exodus the song was for victory over Pharaoh and his evil power and then in this final Exodus the song is again for victory but this time over the beast and his evil power and so it is the ultimate song of salvation and it proclaims the ultimate deliverance and it tells us of the ultimate dwelling of God with his people it's for

God's people and it's for God's world because God's end time judgment will sort everything out and God's universal reign will be acknowledged by all people and God will dwell with his people forever in a new heaven and a new earth the holy city the new Jerusalem and so this is the song that all God's people will be singing for all eternity and so all those who have turned from their sin and put their trust in Jesus will be singing it and so we better be singing about God's salvation right now as the warm-up to the main performance which is to come but don't worry you don't need to worry about your singing ability it doesn't matter if you're like me and you can't carry a tune in a bucket because well have you ever been to a football match before if you haven't you should go and experience a bit of life but in a football match all fans have got something to sing about no matter how badly their team is performing even partick thistle fans have got something to sing about and you sing

[31 : 46] I don't care what you're singing sounds like because you sing for the love of your team and so when we know God and when we love God and when we've experienced God's salvation then we have got something to sing about but if you don't know God through the Lord Jesus Christ then literally you have got nothing to sing about Johann Sebastian Bach the great German composer and musician claimed that the aim and final reason of all music should be none else but the glory of God and refreshing the soul where this is not observed there will be no music but only a devilish hubbub and so it's always time to sing praise to God you can even bring out the tambourines and put on your dancing shoes if you want even in the free church because everyone who knows and loves the Lord

God men women boys girls is called to join the choir and sing the song of salvation and if you're not part of it yet then there's space for you to join and while we may be practicing here on earth and everything isn't perfect just yet what we're practicing for is the crescendo that will come in heaven when one day we will sing the everlasting song of salvation to the glory and praise of God for all eternity for all God's people will worship him for who he is for what he is like and for what he has done for us in Jesus and so the only question is will your voice be heard in that choir