



Exodus (Part 17) – From Bitter to Sweet

Matt Chandler – December 18, 2016

[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. This story began several thousand years ago, and it began with a promise from God to Abraham that he would make his offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky, a great nation who would one day dwell in the Promised Land.

More than 400 years passed, and Abraham's descendants had not seen this promise fulfilled. Instead, the Israelites lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. Fearing the Hebrews would grow into a mighty nation and overtake them, the pharaoh of Egypt forced them to work as slaves. But Israel continued to grow.

In response, the Egyptians increased their oppression of God's people, and Pharaoh gave a terrible decree. Every son born to the Hebrews would be thrown into the river. But a Levite couple defied this order, trusting God's will for their son's life, and God *did* have a plan for this child. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and took pity on him. She named him Moses because he was drawn out of the water.

As Moses grew older and saw the suffering of his people, anger burned within him. When he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the man and fled Egypt to hide in the desert. Years passed, and Moses made a new life for himself in Midian. Then, one day the voice of the Lord called out to him from a burning bush. God told Moses that he saw the persecution of his people in Egypt, and he heard their cries. He promised to deliver the Israelites from slavery, and he commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh on their behalf.

Moses was terrified, so God sent Moses' brother Aaron to go with him. The brothers went before Pharaoh performing signs and wonders, but Pharaoh would not listen. So God brought down plagues upon Egypt, yet Pharaoh's heart remained hard as stone. To prepare for the tenth and final plague, the Hebrews marked their doors with the blood of spotless lambs. That night the angel of death passed through the kingdom, killing the firstborn child of every Egyptian household that did not bear the mark, including Pharaoh's.

Heartbroken, Pharaoh told the Israelites to go. They were finally set free. The Spirit of God led the people out and toward the Promised Land, but Pharaoh's grief soon turned to rage. He changed his mind and then commanded the Egyptian army to pursue them. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, Moses lifted his staff to the sky, and the waters parted. The Hebrews passed through the towering waves, and the Egyptians were swallowed by the sea.

God had indeed drawn his people out of bondage, out of darkness, and into the light of his presence. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out of our sin, our Egypt, and draws us into his presence into relationship with him.

[End of video]

Good morning. It's good to see you. If you have a Bible, go ahead and grab it. Exodus, chapter 15. It's hard to believe this is our seventeenth week in the book of Exodus. We're going to kind of round out or land the plane on what we can just call "Exodus – Part One." Then over the course of the next month, we'll be out of Exodus. We'll come back in February. The first weekend in February through the last weekend in May, we'll look at Exodus 16 through 40. That will be our yearlong study in Exodus.

I love that we're ending the fall series in Exodus on Exodus 15, which is basically a song of praise to God. When we first saw the people of Israel, they are in bondage. They are on the receiving end of a genocide at the hands of a lunatic tyrant. Their sons are being thrown into the Nile River. They are raping and beating and pillaging and destroying the people of God, and yet the people of God continue to grow so that the best-laid plans of men are finding their end impossible next to the power of God.

Now we end this part of the book of Exodus with the people of God out of that bondage, out of slavery, and now celebrating the goodness and grace of God via a song. Most of Exodus 15 is

actually a song they sang, and then there are some other kind of historic pieces around it in Exodus 15. Let me set up Exodus 15 like this.

There are over 400 verses in the Bible about singing. There are 50 explicit commands around singing, which, if we just stop for a second, that's a weird command mixed in with all of the other commands 50 times, right? "Don't murder. Oh, and sing." Right? "You shouldn't touch another man's wife. Sing. Don't steal, but sing." Right?

It's a weird idea to think that there are so many commands about singing. Now for those of you who like to sing, you're like, "I love those commands." What I've learned is there is a certain group of people who really love to sing at church. They love it. Maybe not even just at church, they just love to sing. That is not most of us. Right? Most of us don't really like to sing.

In fact, it's been my experience here for the last 14 years that many of us think singing is some sort of kind of an add-on to the proclamation of the Word. "Hey, just get to the Bible, and start with all this *Glee* nonsense. All right? Just open up the Book. Give me the Book." Yet we go through great pains here to make sure we're singing the Bible, we're reading the Bible, and we're preaching the Bible. The Bible shapes and informs all we do.

I don't know if you're aware of how kind of churches work and how they all function, but we're oftentimes really looking at everything we do and whether or not we as elders and pastors and ministers are doing all we can within the context God has placed us to serve you well, being fully obedient to the fullness of Scripture and what God would have us do.

We noticed several years ago once we finally stopped turning away from our six services (which is what we were doing back then), you guys would actually start showing up 10 minutes late to miss some of the singing. Then we thought, "Do you know what? This is really important. There are 50 commands in the Scriptures. We want to help them kind of experience what God would have us experience in the singing of the Word of God congregationally."

So we switched it. I don't know if you were here for this, but then we moved singing to the back, and we used singing as a response to the proclamation of the Word. Man, y'all are shady. I want to just give it to you. I wasn't even mad. Bleecker would be up here trying to lead you in worship. I would pray, say *amen*. Y'all would gather your stuff right in front of my man and bail out the door with him trying to sing to you.

Then I was like, "Turn the lights on. Just keep the lights up." All that did is help Bleecker see you bail on him. Now I'm in the back trying to cheer that brother up and say, "We serve the Lord. You matter before Jesus. You just rest in the grace of God on your heart. We don't sing to empty seats. We just proclaim the goodness of God to all who will hear and respond." I think I understand why in 2016 it's hard for church folk to really get into singing.

Once a year, I take my daughters on a special date. I try to date them often just to get them prepared for any schmuck out there who might have weak game and come. I'm just setting them up to win so they're not blown away when a door gets opened for them. They're like, "Well, yeah, of course." They're not blown away when flowers are brought. They're expecting that. You're like, "You're making her high maintenance." Yes, I am! Low maintenance in life. Go to the nations to see Christ known, but you're going to earn that.

Audrey was 7. I splurged and bought us second row center seats for *Barbie Live in Fairytopia* at Bass Hall. I don't know if you know this epic fable of good versus evil, but... Audrey got a new dress. We got her some jewelry and then little just kind of trinket-y bracelets and stuff. I showed up at my own house with a little flower, and she hopped in the car. We headed to Fort Worth and ate a meal.

Then we went and saw *Barbie Live in Fairytopia*. As soon as we sat down, I noticed (I didn't know if she noticed) where I was sitting I could see the stage manager giving instructions to those who would be a part of the production that night. If you don't know the story of *Barbie: Fairytopia*, this is a spoiler alert. All right?

The bad guys in *Barbie: Fairytopia* are fungus, and fungus are destroying Barbie Fairytopia's world. I don't want to ruin this for you, but Barbie is going to save the day. There's this moment about 12 minutes in to the production of *Barbie: Fairytopia* where the lights dim, and the music gets foreboding. Men and women dressed as fungus come out on the stage.

My 7-year-old daughter looked up at me, and she said, "Those aren't real fungus. Those are people dressed as fungus." It's funny, right? As her daddy, my heart broke for her because in that moment, the magic was gone. The enchantment, the mystery, the wonder was gone. Then the rest of the play was all right, but without...

You know, what you want for your children is enchantment. You want mystery. You want awe. That's what makes kids so awesome, right? For all of the ways they can create stress, with all of the ways they can be frustrating, with all the ways they can destroy things that are indestructible, that awe, that magic, that enchantment is there, and it beckons our heart back to where the Lord would have us.

We are in 2016 a disenchanted people. There's an answer for everything. There's a pill for everything. There's a theory about everything. There is nothing left that is mysterious. If it *is* mysterious, then we'll create a theory, call the theory *fact* to destroy any type of enchantment or admission that we don't know. We just don't know! The call of the Enlightenment is, "We can figure it out. We can do it. We know what's going on."

We can't figure a lot out. We don't know what's going on in a lot of different places, and the more we know, the actual more we're learning we don't know. Unlocking one thing opens up a thousand others, right? We can never be intellectually honest about that, not in 2016. We're disenchanted. There is no enchantment. There is no mystery. There's nothing to be in awe of. There's nothing to be deeply moved by.

Then on top of that, you pile into this kind of sacred/secular divide. Nobody has a problem singing at a Coldplay concert or a U2 concert or some secular gathering. We'll sing out loud, and we'll love that everybody else is singing. Then once you get into the sacred, then it's just information. It's just, "Give me facts." Right?

Yet we're singing what is true in the congregation far more than we're singing what is true at any other concert we've been to. I'm not an anti-concert guy. I've seen George Strait and Andrea Bocelli in the last month. I'm not anti those things as much as I'm saying that what we all sing out loud at Bocelli and Strait is not the true Word of God that we sing as we gather together as the congregation.

We're disenchanted. We're broken into sacred and secular, and this robs us. More than I want to spend a lot of time kind of trying to unpack why we struggle to sing, I want to talk about what it reveals about God that he would command for us to sing. Again, I just want to keep pointing it's just a really weird command. "Sing. Don't murder. Sing. Don't steal. Sing. Honor your parents. Sing." It's just 50 times. That's a bit redundant, can we agree? Fifty times to sing to the Lord. Make a joyful noise to the Lord.

What's this revealing about God? Well, I've said for years (and I'm just going to argue till I die because I so believe it's true) every command of God in the Bible is about lining us up with who God created us to be and is ultimately for his glory and...what? Our joy. The command to sing is about our joy, so here's what we know about singing in 2016.

Corporate singing strengthens the immune system. Group singing is a natural antidepressant. Singing releases endorphins and oxytocin into the system, which lowers stress levels, diminishes cortisol. It improves mental clarity and lessens feelings of depression and anxiety. That's what corporate or group singing does.

Maybe you're in here and you're going, "Well, not me, bro." Listen. I know. I've heard those people sing, and I agree. I can feel anxiety leave. I can feel stress diminish. I can just get caught up in some beautiful voice. Brother, I'm like one of those dudes in the first week of *American Idol*. When I sing, the opposite happens.

Now I knew you would be here, so I wanted to quote this for you. According to one 2005 study, group singing can produce satisfying and therapeutic sensations even when the sound produced by the vocal instruments are of...what? Mediocre quality. This is why the Bible says, "Make a *joyful* noise" but not a *good* one. God knows. God knows he gave someone the gift and another person *not* the gift.

It's not about you performing. It's about you receiving. See, that's the big confusion around corporate singing. No, no, no. We receive when we sing together as a body. We're not performing. C.S. Lewis once said in his *Reflections on the Psalms* that God sounded like a little old lady begging for compliments. No, no, no. It's not that *God* is in need; it's that *we're* in need.

Again, this is more evidence. If these things are true (and science is saying they're true), then the command of God to sing in the corporate gathering, to sing to the Lord, is about our joy. It's about for maybe just a moment the diminishing of anxiety and fear. Maybe just for those 15-20 minutes, cortisol is dying down in our system and we're able to breathe and rest. I think it shouldn't be lost on us that Saul, tormented by demons, found comfort only when David played the harp and sang to him. The demons fled from David singing on his harp so that the Lord is invited.

What does it tell us about the nature and character of God that God himself sings? Do you know who loves to sing? Children. Right? They just love to sing, and they don't care whether they sing well. They don't even care if what they're singing makes sense. They're just going to sing about it. "I'm in the sandbox. I'm playing in the sandbox." We love watching them sing. There's a magic there. There's an enchantment there. They're whimsical.

What does it reveal? I think that God sings and that God commands for us to sing reveals something about the nature and character of God that we rarely think about, namely that God is a God of joy, and God is a God of whimsy and magic and enchantment. There is something to the mystery of the universe, him knowing that he knows what we do not that makes him playful. Sing. It's really profound.

If you're like, "Oh no! Is this where you make us sing?" No. I'm pointing all of this out because we're going to dive into a song the Israelites, captivated by the strength of God, by the personal initiative of God for their good over the cosmic victory of God once and for all and over their future security, have what's true about God in their minds and their experience of God in their hearts collide, and for a moment of clarity, they sing.

Keep in mind we're talking hundreds of thousands of people singing. Can you imagine the reverberations? Can you imagine how stirring that would be? With that said, let's look at this. Exodus 15. Like I said, not all of this chapter is the song, but most of it is. Exodus, chapter 15, starting in verse 1. We'll read the whole chapter.

"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. 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.

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. 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 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. 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. 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. 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.'

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.' 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." I love how thorough that sentence is. "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.' Then they came to Elim,

where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water."

Now I think there are four themes in this song, and I just want us to look at those themes and consider them. Then we'll come back and look at verses 22 through 27 again just to kind of root ourselves in the things we'll cover in these songs. The first thing the people of Israel are celebrating in song is...

1. *The strength of God.* Look back at the second half of verse 1 as the song starts. **"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. 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. 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."

Now it's important to note that in the song, what they're singing is that God has triumphed over the horse and his rider. The horse and his rider, which is also what Miriam points out with the tambourine, is both the agent and the instrument of war. By destroying both horse *and* rider, there is no longer anything to fear. The threat has been neutralized completely. A people who have been on the receiving end of injustice and oppression and violence for hundreds and hundreds of years now find themselves free. Both the horse and his rider have been destroyed.

Then in verse 2, what we see entered into the vernacular of God's people is a phrase that is still common and used to this day. **"The Lord is my strength and my song...my salvation."** That would be written about later in Psalm 118 and Psalms 25 and 27. It would be written about in Isaiah 12. Even to this day, the people of God would say, "The Lord is my strength. He is my song. He is my salvation."

The song that was birthed into the heart of God's people on this day is the song in the hearts of God's people today in 2016. **"The Lord is my strength and my song...my salvation."** To the ends of the earth, the people of God still cry this out to Yahweh. They still cry this out to God. We see in this first course that Yahweh is the God who redeems his people and overthrows his foes. He is a warrior, and he makes war for the glory of his name and on behalf of his people.

They were blown away by this. They had seen it firsthand. They were blown away by it, and they sang. They sang and rejoiced. It's a weird song. **"The LORD is a man of war."** The Lord makes war. They're singing and rejoicing. Why? Because that warring destroyed what was evil, and it benefited or made the people of God the benefactor of that war, freeing them from oppression, injustice, evil, genocide, rape, and a thousand wickednesses that could be launched upon a people via a tyrant. That's not all they're celebrating. They're also celebrating...

2. *The personal intervention and action of the Lord.* Look in verse 6. **"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 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."

I covered this last week, so I'll just mention it here briefly. If you want a bigger, kind of more robust build-out of this, you'll have to listen to last weekend's sermon. It's a good thing for the people of God that the Lord shatters his enemies. Because the Lord shatters our enemies, it frees us up to not have enemies. Right? What I have been set free to do because the Lord shatters enemies is to be an agent of reconciliation, to preach, teach, and herald gospel hope, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation to the Creator.

I battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and spiritual realities, but I'm not battling against flesh and blood. I've been set free to turn the other cheek. I've been set free to show hospitality. I've been set free to put myself in harm's way for the glory of God. I've been set free to do all of that. I've been set free to go to the ends of the earth, even where I might be despised. Why? Because the Lord shatters his enemies. I don't have enemies to shatter. The Lord will do that.

Then the second thing I want to point out here is this song is beautifully written in regard to distinguishing the power of God versus the power of man. Let's look at it. I'll read with emphasis again so you can kind of get a sense.

"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."

You can hear it. *Your, you, you, your.* "You did this. You accomplished this. You made this happen. You took the initiative. You took action on my behalf. It was not us; it was *you*." We tend to forget this. The reason why Miriam grabbed the tambourine and started going nuts, the reason Bleecker does what he does, is to remind the people of God that God has done this. *We* have not done this; *God* has done this. God is our strength. God is our song. God is our salvation.

We have not earned anything. We have been the recipients of the strength, kindness, and initiative of God in the heavens, which is why the second part of this stanza shows the futility of man-driven effort. **"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.'"**

It went from *you, you, you, you, you* to... What were the Egyptians thinking? "*I, I, I, I, I.*" Verse 10: **"You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters."** I want to point out here that the Bible is saying despite the long patience of God, finally when the fury of God is unleashed, it moves quickly. That's what we've seen in Egypt, and that's what you'll see throughout the rest of the Old Testament. That's what I think you even see in our day and age.

If you've ever built a fire... If when I said that you thought about flipping a switch in your living room, we're on two different pages. I'm not judging you for that. It's easy, quick, and clean. What I mean by "starting a fire" is the process of kind of gathering what's called *stubble* or *kindling*, things that will light easily.

Then as that starts to go, you put smaller twigs on. As that starts to go, you put bigger sticks on. As that starts to go, you finally get your logs on there. Then you have yourself a roaring fire. *Stubble* is something that lights quickly and burns quickly. You have to stay on top of stubble. It's going to go pretty quickly if you don't feed it.

What the Bible just says is the fury of God burns through the enemies of God like stubble. It happens quickly. If you've been with us these last 17 weeks, you're like, "Whoa! It's been like 400 years. Four

hundred years isn't quick. That's five generations. How could you say 400 years is quick?" Well, no, no, no. The *wrath* of God is slow; the *fury* of God is fast. Let me try to distinguish between those two.

The idea of *wrath* is steadily building opposition against. It's a rhythm God gets into with those who are not his children. God is the Creator of *all*, but he is only the Father of *some*. Are you tracking with me? He is the Creator of *all*, the Father of *some*. The way God deals with those who are not his children, who are in glad rebellion against him, is to endure with great patience their rebellion and then enter that rebellion and plead with them to repent and come home and then back out and be patient and then come back and plead with them and then be patient.

Plead with them and be patient. Plead with them and be patient. Plead with them and be patient. Then he pleads with them and is patient. Then after that, he is more patient. Then from there, he shows more patience. Then after that, more patience until finally (not toward his children, because his children are not under wrath; they're under mercy) when God's patience with his enemies is done, spent, he unleashes fury, and fury always works quickly.

Where wrath works slowly in the steadfast love of God, his fury burns through his enemies like stubble, which means his enemies aren't the big logs; they're the little stubble that's easy to burn through. We saw that in Egypt, and the people of God remembered God did this. God made a way. God got them out, and they sing.

3. *Cosmic victory*. It's not just this personal intervention and action, and it's not just his strength. They're also celebrating this cosmic victory that's occurred, and it's in this next part of the text that we see a new idea interjected into human history. Exodus 15:11 through 13. Look at this.

"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."

The idea of holiness isn't a new concept. Holiness means other than. It means different than. Holy...different than. When the Israelites are singing that God is holy, that's not a new concept, especially because they tie God's holiness back to his power. "You are mighty and majestic in power. The earth has swallowed, and the creative order obeys you." But that wouldn't have been anything new. The Egyptians thought that about *their* god.

Now I could point out that God has laid them bare as being no god at all through the plagues and through the exodus, but then the song goes on to say something that had never been said or considered before in human history. "You are holy not just because of your power," because Apsu and Marduk and Tiamat and any of the Egyptian gods would have been considered to be powerful and needed to appease.

They say, "No, no. You are holy in your steadfast love." That phrase *steadfast love* is the Hebrew word *checed*. It's a different kind of love than maybe you're thinking. It's not a love of kind of emotive fluttering heart but a love of the will. It's a love of decision. Here's why that's so powerful.

What we see in this moment when the people of Israel sing, "You are holy in power. You are other than in your power. No one has power like you. You command all of creation. The sea obeys you. The wind obeys you. The locusts obey you. Disease. Everything obeys you. You are holy, but you're also steadfast in love. You're also *checed*."

Checed. God is the real, "I do." Are you tracking with me? When people get married, they turn, and they face one another. They give these really impossible covenant promises. That's what the Lord does, except the Lord is able to keep his word. The Lord looks upon his people and says, "In sickness and in health, I do. I'm in. You are my people. I am your God. I am not going anywhere. You're mine. My kindness is yours, my strength is yours, and my personal action will be at your attention. I'm not going anywhere."

There had never been (and to this day there is not) a God whose holiness is marked not just by power but by *checed*, love. "I'm not going anywhere. I do. I will. I cannot break my promises to you because I promise by my own name." That's a stunning proclamation, and it's what sets Christianity outside of all other world religions. No other world religion has a God who promises to flex his power, might, and holiness to *love* his people unconditionally.

It sounds crazy, and yet this is what they're singing. They get this, and it blows their mind. They sing. It's not just this cosmic victory over other gods and this God who is holy in power and in steadfast love, but it's also a celebration of...

4. *Future victory*. Look at verse 14 through 18. **"The people 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."

Again, if we're reading the Bible with our imagination... I always want to say this. I don't mean you're imagining things that aren't there. I'm saying you're reading the text with an eye for trying to smell, see, and feel the weight of what's happening in the Scriptures. The most powerful empire human history knew in this point was just destroyed and laid waste, and the whole world saw it.

They didn't watch it on Twitter. They didn't see it pop up on their devices, but Egypt...great, wealthy, powerful Egypt that had made all these other nations subservient...has now been laid to ashes at the hands not of a revolt of slaves but natural disaster after natural disaster after natural disaster until finally the great sea split and swallowed the Egyptian army.

Now we're a disenchanted people, so that doesn't freak us out, but to enchanted people, I mean, these nations are terrified of the God of these slaves. The nations now tremble. They're still. The song paints this picture of people who are unwilling to move because of terror.

I know you don't think you would do that if you got terrorized. I know all of you think you're Jason Bourne, and the second something terrifying happened you'd do like a roundhouse ninja kick and stab somebody in the throat with a pen, but really what he is saying... I don't know where that stuff comes from. That's not in the notes. It just happens.

Ultimately in this text they're saying they're so terrified, they can't move. If after Exodus we would get into Joshua, we'd see this exact thing take place. The nations aren't necessarily afraid of the Israelites, but they're terrified of the God of the Israelites. When they believe the God of the Israelites are not on the Israelites' side, they get cocky. They want to fight. They want to make war.

But when the God of Israel shows up, they know it, and they flee. They will oftentimes in confusion turn and kill one another when they think the God of the Israelites is present. Here's what's happening. They are singing about future victory. Like I said, if we could go into Joshua and into some of the other Pentateuch books we would see this happen. These nations do tremble. They did stand still.

They were mortified at what the God of Israel could do (and does, by the way, to tie it back to last week) after hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years of opportunity for them to repent and turn away from their rebellion. Now when the fury of God arrives, it arrives swiftly, and it arrives in the dwindling down of Israel's army so God could flex and make himself known. Israel just never has a really scary army. They just have a really terrifying God. They're celebrating this future victory.

I think one of the things I see happen... I think eschatology is a good thing to study and to study what the end times will look like. I just think people get into it, and then they get all goofy and start making scrolls in their garage. It just gets really strange, or it becomes this consuming kind of thing to the neglect of the gospel and the mission of God given to the church.

Listen. What they're singing about is this truth. It's true about you and true about me. If this is our God, then our future is secure. What have I to fear today? What do I have to fear that 10,000 years from now would cause any consternation? I could die. I could get sick. But I just don't think that matters 10,000 years from now. I don't think 10,000 years from now I'm like, "Really? I couldn't have gotten another couple of years?"

Something could happen to Lauren, and I would be straight with you. I'm going to need some help if something happens to Lauren. You won't see me for several months. I'm going to probably have to find some Jedi counselor who can help me get back on my feet. I'm rooted in my faith, but that would be a shot to me. Lauren loves Jesus. She loves Jesus more than she loves me. In fact, right before the 9:00 a.m. service, she texted me, "Ezekiel is a weird book."

Now that's flirting. She is flirting with me, like putting in my head that she is like at the kitchen bar drinking coffee, reading Ezekiel. Right? That's like an aphrodisiac for me, right? Do you know what's happening? No! Why are you at the kitchen reading Ezekiel when it's 12 degrees outside? Because she loves Jesus. She is a perfect partner for me in gospel ministry and in life. I love her.

If something happened to her, I would be devastated. But 10,000 years from now, I'll be with her. She'll be with me, making much of Jesus together. If you're like, "Well, I thought you weren't given in marriage in glory," no, no. There won't be any *weddings* in glory. It doesn't mean I still don't have a special relationship with the wife of my youth. I know there are some other theologians out there who are like, "Actually, but..." I'm saying we can agree to disagree, brother or sister.

Now what if something happened to my children? That's some of our greatest fears as parents. Gosh! I've seen it. I can't fathom it. I don't know when I'd get up off the floor. I don't. But all three of my babies have confessed Christ as Lord, so 10,000 years from now... What if I lost all my money? Shoot. When I married Lauren, I was making \$12,000 a year before taxes. Some of you are like, "Well, if you're making \$12,000, that's not a lot of taxes." Look. When you make \$12,000 a year, *any* little bit taken from you is a lot.

I mean, we're splitting a can of Dr. Thunder, and those things were like 25 cents a can back then, right? I mean, *broke broke...and happy. Broke broke and happy.* I mean, I could just go on and on. What can happen to me? I'm secure. I am a son of God, adopted by the blood of Christ. My future is secure.

His power and strength is in the present. He is working for his glory and my good. I don't pretend to understand how all those pieces come together. That's the mystery you give yourself over to a billion hours of study that will still be present. Can he be trusted? Yes. Is he good? Yes. Will there be confusing, difficult, painful seasons? Absolutely, but he is good, and he does good.

They're singing of their future security. Maybe we can end like this before I read verses 22 through 27 again as an illustration of the things we've covered. Earlier we sang this song called "God With Us." It's a song by the band All Sons & Daughters. I personally love the song. It's not just a Christmas song, but its themes are very Christmassy, if I can use that word. Here are the lyrics we sang earlier.

You've come to bring peace,
To be love, to be nearer to us.
You've come to bring life,
To be light, to shine brighter in us.
Oh Emmanuel, God with us.

Now "God with us" is what Emmanuel means. That's just a redundant thing there, but I love what's happening in the song.

You've come to bring peace,
To be love.

As the people of God gathered as the communion of saints here in this place, a congregation of faith, we have the opportunity to sing this song as either those who are in desperate need of Christ to be that peace as we're inwardly raging or in need for Christ to be that peace as our external relationships and environment... Although I know this is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, I'm not naïve enough to buy it anymore. This is a hard time of the year for many.

We want him to be our peace, and we think about he has come to be love. Think about how often we wrestle with our own self-condemnation, our own difficulty at comprehending the steadfast love, the *cheched* love, of God for us. We have an opportunity. They're singing this rooted in the reality of it or in a heart that's longing for it, but we're not passive when we're singing.

It's commanded. It's not a suggestion if you have a good voice, if you're in the emotional groove, if you're in your happy spot. No, no, no. We sing because the Lord has commanded us to sing for his glory and our good. But we're not passive; we're active as we worship in song. Listen. The people of God have struggled with this.

It's why you saw Miriam break out the tambourine and get her girls' choir together and go to work, reminding them, "The Lord has triumphantly destroyed our enemies, horse and rider. Let's sing it! Horse and rider! Let's sing it! We are completely free. Let's rejoice in it. He has destroyed all of it. There's nothing to fear. Let's sing it."

The nature, like I said, of what Bleecker does when he comes out here (and I know there are other worship pastors at other campuses) is he is doing what Miriam did in the text. He is saying, "He has done this. He is bringing hope. He is bringing life. This is what the Word of God says. This is what's true about God. This is what's true about us. Let's encourage one another as we hear one another's voices, even if they're mediocre."

Now I want to read verses 22 through 27 to root us back in God's kindness and to set the stage for what chapter 16 will show us starting in February. Verse 22:

"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." If you're not picking it up, *bitterness* means *Marah*, and *Marah* means *bitterness*. I didn't know if you were picking that up. Verse 24: **"And the people grumbled against Moses..."**

Gosh! Can that sentence just encourage your heart, that these people just went from an epic tambourine-laden worship service to three days later going, "I thought you were going to provide for me. I thought you were going to help me. I thought you weren't going to abandon us. I thought you were..."? That's a sentence that brings comfort to your pastor's heart. Oh gosh! Good. Okay. Let's watch how the Lord responds to this. Verse 25:

"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.'"

Look at verse 27. **"Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water."** When we started Exodus, we were in slavery on the receiving end of a genocide. Now through our grumbling and complaining and accusations against God and many signs and wonders, God leads us out of bondage, leads us out of slavery, and quickly we forget, complain, and grumble.

God delivers us again with mighty acts via salvation or whatever. Then we respond to that rejoicing in the strength of God, in the initiative of God, in the cosmic victory of God and our future being secure. Then along the way, we can't find water, and we grumble and complain. If I'm God, I'm doing something else with the log. Right? But I'm not God. God is *cheeced*. He is the real "I do."

How does he treat his beloved? It's hard for us to imagine that's what we are (the beloved). How does he treat this grumbling, complaining people? By giving them sweet water to drink and giving them shade and 12 springs in the middle of a desert. In the midst of their grumbling and complaining, God gives them water, shade, steadfast love. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this text. What a perfect text for this week as we consider the incarnation, Jesus, the God putting on flesh and dwelling among us. I'm hungry to see us worship with such zeal, to be deeply rooted in rejoicing in your strength, being blown away by your initiative, stunned by your cosmic victory, your holiness being marked by your power but also being marked by your love, and resting securely in our future being in your hands.

We thank you and praise you that we join this people as part of them, saying that you are our strength and our song. You are the God of our salvation. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

© 2016 The Village Church