

Exodus Chapter 15 v 1 - 21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 January 2016

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] If you were to Exodus and chapter 15, where we read the chapter, most of the chapter anyway, up to verse 22 just a little while ago.

Again, if you've got the church, the New Church Bible, then that's page 72 in that. Now, where do you do your singing?

I would hazard a guess that all of us sing, not just in church on a Sunday, but during the week as well. Or at the very least, hum, whistle, or sing in some way.

It's part of our makeup, isn't it? It's part of who we are, part, I believe, of the image of God within us. That means that we want to sing, we want music. No matter how tone deaf we may be, or how tune we may be, there are times we sing and make music in our hearts.

Perhaps it may be you sing in the shower, or in the bath, or whistle while you work. All around the world, in every culture, there is music, there is song, there is singing.

[1 : 13] Football matches. Men will sing heartily. Even hymns, abide with me, and things like that. Rugby matches as well. Swing low, sweet chariot.

Women, I think, tend to sing along with the radio, or when they're driving the car, or perhaps in other places as well. But more important than where you sing, is why do you sing?

And particularly, of course, as Christians, why do we as Christians sing? Whenever we get together, whether it's in a midweek, or whether it's here on a Sunday, whenever Christians come together, inevitably, we will sing.

And we know that that is the case all the way through church history, that the church has always been about singing praise to God. Paul writes on two occasions, one in Colossians and elsewhere in Ephesians, that there the church were to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

And yet, here we are, right back in Exodus 15, and we have the first recorded song in the Bible. This song of Moses and Miriam and the people.

[2 : 27] 3,000 years before Charles Wesley picked up his pen to begin to write his first hymn. And in this hymn, this early hymn, this first hymn, really, of God's people, there's a lot for us to learn.

A lot for us to learn about the sort of things that we should be singing about. The things that please God when we sing, because singing is to his praise. And hopefully, as we look through something of the things that God's people sing about here, we shall see what that means for us as Christians today, and be encouraged to be those people who sing with joy and praise to God, just as God's people did here.

So I said at the start, why? Why do we sing? And why, of course, why did Moses and the Israelites, we're told in verse 1, burst into a song to the Lord?

Well, again, we need to, of course, bear in mind their recent history, what had just happened to them. Here they were, we're told, they've arrived on the eastern shore of the Red Sea.

And what makes it so special about arriving on the eastern shore of the Red Sea is how they got there. They didn't get there by boat, they didn't get there by bridge, they didn't even swim across, but they walked across on dry land.

[3 : 52] There it is later on in verse 19. The Israelites walked through the sea on dry land. Amazing, incredible. Of course, over the years, that historical event has been poo-pooed and criticized, or tried to be worked out like many of the miracles in the Bible.

And scholars would say, well, of course, there was low tide, and there was only a few inches of water for them to walk across, and so it wouldn't have been too difficult.

Well, the trouble with that one is, of course, is if it was only a couple of inches deep, how is it possible that hundreds, if not possibly thousands, of horses and soldiers were drowned in two inches of water?

Because that's what we learn as well. The amazing thing, not only that God brought his people through safely, but that he totally defeated those armies, those enemies, that were seeking to kill and destroy God's people.

Verse 19, when Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them. This was nothing else but a mighty work of God.

[5 : 02] A wonderful act of God, not only imparting the Red Sea so that the people could safely come through, but delivering the people from the armies of their enemies, the Egyptians, by bringing the sea down upon them and drowning them.

It was God's work. There in verse 1, both horse and driver, he has hurled into the sea. No wonder that they burst out in praise.

No wonder that they begin to sing. When you think of all that's happened beforehand, all the anxiety and fear that they had as they left Egypt. And then as they reached the Red Sea, seeing the armies and the horses and the chariots coming to take them back into captivity, almost certainly to kill a great number of them as well, the fear that they had for those 24 hours that we're told, while God placed a pillar of fire and cloud between them.

And now they were free. Now they were truly liberated. Now they had nothing more to be anxious about. There's an outburst. I don't know if you've ever been to a live football match or been in a football stadium when a goal is scored, or even walking by.

There's a great thunderous shout, isn't there, that happens. An eruption of noise and cheering. And that's just sport. That's just football or rugby or whatever it may be.

[6 : 24] But here is God doing something incredible and wonderfully for his people. And that's what this hymn is all about. What God has done. It's hymn about what God has done for those that he loved, defeating their enemies who had cruelly enslaved them for 400 years.

And in those first 12 verses of the song, it's all about God's doing. They're recounting, retelling the events that God has performed for them.

How particularly there in verse 9, with arrogance, Pharaoh came to pursue them. The enemy boasted, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide them, I will draw my sword.

There was a confidence, of course there was, for Pharaoh. He was the superpower of the day. He had the super weapons of the day.

In chariots and horsemen and trained soldiers, here they were, just a rag bag tag of slaves, builders, women and children.

[7 : 28] He had no reason to doubt that he should recapture them and that he should defeat them. But he hadn't reckoned on the Lord. That was always his problem, wasn't it? All the way through the plagues, Pharaoh kept forgetting who God was.

He was a God who's not idle. He's not a God who stands by, wrings his hands when things go wrong, and shakes his head and touch. He's a God of action, and a God who stands against wickedness, and a God who deals with evil where he encounters it.

And that's what he did there. So the first thing that God's people are to sing about is what God has done for them. What God has done. That's the reason why we're to sing.

We're to sing about what God has done. And there's so many things, of course, that we can sing about what God has done, of his marvelous works, of his incredible acts. We think of creation, the world he's made, this universe, the beauty of it.

That could cause us to sing. The psalmist is full of that, isn't it? Praise your maker. We sang that at the beginning. Praise our maker. We can sing about how God provides for us and meets our needs.

[8 : 38] How he gives us health and strength and undertakes for us. How he gives to us so many good things. But of course, for those of us who are Christians, the greatest thing we should sing about, the real thing that should move our hearts more than anything else, to sing praise to God, is the greatest work he has done in sending his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In sending him into this world to rescue us and deliver us and set us free. Many Bible teachers believe that when we read Philippians 2, it is one of the very first Christian hymns.

And if you have it in your Bible, it's often set out a little bit like a hymn with verses. And it says this, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death,

even death on a cross.

And it goes on to speak about him being exalted as well. One of the early Christian hymns speaks about Jesus and what he has done for us.

[9 : 58] The greatest event, of course, the greatest event in all the events of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the central act which speaks most about God's love for us, his care for us, his power to save us, is the cross, isn't it?

It's the cross where the triumph took place. It's the cross where Satan was defeated, our enemy, where sin was dealt with. It's there in the cross that we're to sing and rejoice in what God has done. It was God on the cross. And it was God's wrath poured out upon the cross. It was God's victory accomplished at the cross. When the people of Israel had crossed over the other side, they saw the victory with their own eyes.

They saw what God had done because we're told they saw the bodies of the Egyptian soldiers on the shore. They saw it with their own eyes. But we don't need to see the cross with our own eyes to know the power and to know the power of it in our lives.

One of the things that is very unhelpful is to have images of the cross, to have a crucifix or to have a painting of Jesus on the cross or any of those things.

[11 : 19] They are very unhelpful for us because they are only the imagination of a person, a man or a woman. They cannot portray the reality of what happened there. The Egyptians saw firsthand.

We can't see firsthand. And secondhand is no good at all because instead we have the word of God to display for us the reality and the power of the cross in a much better way than any painting or picture or statue can show.

Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter 3 and he says to them, Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. He's not talking about a picture.

He's not talking about them being there because of course this is many years later. They were Gentiles. They weren't in Jerusalem on the day Jesus died. He's talking about the message of the gospel. Preach to them.

In other words he said, As I spoke to you and told you of what God has done at the cross in the Lord Jesus Christ, you saw in a much better way than any picture can display the reality of God's love and power demonstrated there for you.

[12 : 26] The greatest of God's work. And surely dear friends, when we think of the cross and we think of our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done for us, the mighty work he's done in setting us free from sin, setting us free from shame, dying in our place, shouldn't there, can't there, we just can't help but bubble over with praise, bubble over with worship and singing unto our God.

But the sad truth is of course is this, that it's possible to read about the cross of Jesus. It's possible to hear about the great love of God displayed for us there and be unmoved.

Many people read the Bible or hear the gospel preached or know about what happened there but they just don't sing. They don't sing with praise, they don't sing with joy, they don't sing with thankfulness.

And the reason that they don't do that is because of course we can only sing of what God has done for us when he's done it for me. When it's personal. When it's something that I understand for myself.

What made the Moses and the Israelites burst out into song was this, that this great thing that God had done, he had done for them personally.

[13 : 46] And so when they sing and Moses sings, he says in verse 2, the Lord is my strength, my defense, become my salvation. He is my God.

God's. It's only when we know it to be true for us. Whether it's true for anybody else, we won't sing about it. If somebody, the people who won the lottery and won 33 million pounds, we aren't going to be jumping up and down and say, we'll be, that's great, fantastic.

Because it's them, it's not us. I don't think I really want 33 million pounds in all honesty. Because it would only be bad for me. I'd spend it all on sweets or something like that. But, it's got to be personal.

And the question really is this, dear friends, do you sing of Jesus and his cross? Do you sing of all that he's done because you know the effect that it's had upon your life?

Because you know that this is real for you? That he died for you? That he suffered in your place?

That it was his love for you? That he's rescued you from your sins? See, the Red Sea, the parting of

the Red Sea, and the destruction of the enemies of God's people, it wasn't just some historical event to these Israelites.

[15:00] It wasn't something that just happened hundreds of thousands of years ago which had nothing to do with them. You know, a bit like when you were at school and you had history. And the history teacher would talk about Caesar and his legions and William and his conquers.

It just had nothing to do with you, had it? But this is something that affects us now, affects us in the person, in the present. They were free from tyranny, from Pharaoh.

They had nothing more to be anxious about. They were a transformed people, an utterly different people. They weren't the second class, disposable workers of the slave trade.

They were now a people who belonged to God. They had a sense of purpose, a sense of value, because God had done this for them. And it was true for each one of them. And so too for us.

Jesus dying on the cross, rising from the dead. His ongoing life, now in heaven interceding for us and giving us grace and being part of our lives day by day is only meaning if we truly have received him.

[16:07] If it's something that's happened to us. If we are different people from what we were before. Unless we can say like Thomas when he saw Jesus and he said, my Lord and my God.

We'll praise God and we'll sing the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he did for us when we can sing like the hymn writers. Those who said, he took my sins and my sorrows, he made them his very own.

Or elsewhere, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. died he for me who caused his pain for me to him to death pursued.

Jesus' life is not some ancient historical event that has no relevance or impact upon our lives today. All of our joy, all of our salvation, all of our blessings, all of our hope are all because of who he is and what he has done for us.

And we feel it and we know it and we experience it day by day by day. You see, the truth is, dear friends, that we were ourselves enslaved by sin.

[17:27] We were ourselves under the fear of God's justice and judgment. We were powerless and helpless to do anything to set ourselves free. We were filled with fear, anxiety.

We were filled with all sorts of self-loathing. We were estranged from God, abound for everlasting punishment.

That's how Paul describes us in Ephesians 2. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the lusts of our flesh, following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving wrath.

But what's happened? What's happened is that Jesus came into the world and died for us and now through Christ we have been transformed. For it goes on to say, but because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

[18:45] It's by grace you've been saved and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ.

An incredible change has taken place. As great a change as crossing the Red Sea. A greater change as being a slave in Egypt and a free person in God.

Has that change happened to you? Do you know about the things of Jesus? And you can talk about the things of Jesus but nothing has changed. You're still on the other side of the sea.

You're still going the same way you were before. Your life is not any different. Then let me urge you let me say to you don't stay there. God has made a way for you to cross over into life a way to be set free from those things that ruin and twist and enslave you.

It's turning to Christ. It's coming to him. It's believing him for yourself and asking him to forgive your sins and make you his child. Then you'll sing.

[20:05] Then you'll sing like a canary. Then you'll sing every day. Then you'll rejoice because you'll know that all that God has done is for you.

There's one more thing here that God's people sing about. It's the second part of their song. They first of all sung about what God had done but they also then sung about what God had promised he would do.

They sang about their future. They sang with hope about what was yet to come from verse 13. In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed.

What God had done for them in rescuing them in the Red Sea and delivering them from their enemies was the demonstration of his love for them. And it filled them with hope and certainty that what God had done for them would mean that what he promised for them would also be done. What he promised them would come into fulfillment even if they didn't see it then. They looked forward to that day when God would lead them and take them into that promised land he'd given a promise to Abraham centuries before.

[21 : 16] He would lead them into a place of safety a land of their own a place where they would be able to enjoy living with God. As far as they were concerned the future was bright.

In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. They sang about the future. You will bring them verse 17 in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance.

The place you made for your dwelling the sanctuary Lord your hands established. Now they hadn't got there yet had they? In fact they had a long way to go longer than they realized at the time but they knew they would have to face nations who would oppose them.

They speak about them there in verse 14. Philistia the Philistines we know what problem they caused. Edom the Moabites people of Canaan these were the enemies that would come against them and seek to prevent them from getting to the promised land seek them from getting into that new land.

But in spite of all these things they knew that the God who'd done this for them was the God who'd do that for them. The God who'd brought them thus far was the God who'd take them on. Nothing could prevent his purposes his purposes of love for them from being accomplished for their good.

[22 : 40] Notice what they say verse 14 about these terrible nations. Anguish will grip them. They will be terrified. They'll be seized with trembling. They'll melt away.

Dread will fall on them. There'll be still a stone. They didn't fear them. Well why should they? They'd met the superpower of the day the great and awesome and terrible Egyptians wiped out.

Who were these tin pot armies going to be in comparison? What God had done he would do even greater things and bring them through to the end. Their song is one of faith in the future.

The God of the future. And so with us as believers we don't just look back at what God has done for us and the effect that it has upon our lives today. Wonderful marvelous blessed that they are.

But we look forward to what God has promised for us that he will certainly do. We are people who have a future and a hope. Because of what Jesus has done we are headed for heaven.

[23 : 42] We're going to that place where we shall be with God in security and safety forever. That was Jesus' wonderful promise to his disciples on the very night before his death.

John 14 Don't let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it weren't so I would have told you.

I'm going there to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you I'll come back take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

It's not a pipe dream heaven. It's not just some sort of story that we tell boys and girls to keep us good just like some story about hell to stop them from being bad.

These things are realities. Heaven and hell are real. And for the Christian heaven is real. It's more certain than anything that we can touch or see or feel here in this world.

[24 : 40] And it's all come to us through the great victory through the great work of Jesus. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul is encouraging the believers in this truth and he tells them this God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The whole purpose of Jesus coming into the world the whole purpose of him taking on our humanity the whole purpose of him going to the cross and dying in our place and rising again was this to accomplish for us eternal life.

Not just to set us free from our sins so that we could enjoy life as we do now but that we might have eternal life everlasting life that we might not fear death. Why don't we sing about that?

Why is it sometimes that we don't sing as Christians? why is it when we face the enemies of Edom and Philistia and Moab that we don't sing? Why is it that circumstances rob us of that praise of God?

Well it may be dear friends and I put this to you you alone can know your own hearts it may be because we don't think enough of what is before it may be because our eyes are too busy looking

down at our feet and what's around about us that we don't see that everything here is temporary everything here is just for a time but there's a permanent and eternal home for us in heaven which is full of all those things that God has promised even the Old Testament saints we're told in Hebrews 11 look forward to heaven the writer says they were longing for a better country a heavenly one yes we face enemies yes we face trials and difficulties but dear friends with confidence like the people of old we can sing of what God will do there's a lovely little phrase there in verse 17 you will bring them in and plant them we're not pot plants dear friends we are in this world moving here and there but there we shall be rooted and secure there we shall be brought in out of the frost and the cold there we shall be beside quiet waters there we shall drink and bear fruit and all that God has promised for us he will accomplish by his right arm verse 16 by the power of your arm by his strength not ours we feel weak we feel helpless we see the enemy around about us just like the Egyptian armies we see them we see them we see them we see them destructive bent upon evil bent upon destroying the church and ruining everything that Christ has done but they are still a stone in comparison to the work of God they are they will melt away in comparison to what God will do he will guide us he will guard us throughout the long journey home we shall arrive safely in the harbor of heaven and we shall join in the singing of all those saints who have gone before us who themselves had to go the same way as us a way of difficulty but a way of rejoicing and praise here in chapter 7 of Revelation verses 9 and 10 we are told this after this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count every nation tribe people language standing before the throne and before the Lamb and they cried out in a loud voice salvation belongs to our God they'd have reached it hadn't they and when they reached the goal and they were there what did they say

[28 : 33] God's done it all for us he was worth trusting he was worth relying upon he was worth praising and singing dear friend that's true of us no matter how we feel whether we've just crossed the Red Sea of a problem or whether we're still on the other side whether we're traipsing through the wilderness or whether we're on the boundary of the River Jordan whatever we are wherever we are whenever we are we can sing the praise of God every day in every circumstance we can lift our voice to worship and adore him for who he is what he's done and what he is doing and what he most certainly will do close with the words of a psalm psalm 96 and encourages us to sing to praise to God listen to this sing to God a new song sing to the Lord all the earth sing to the Lord praise his name proclaim his salvation day after day declare his glory among the nations his marvelous deeds among all peoples well let's do that even now as we bring our time this morning to a close as we sing 144

I hope that this is something of praise the Lord you his servants praise the name of the Lord let the name of the Lord be praised both now and forevermore from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets the name of the Lord is to be praised Amen