

Exodus 15
August 10, 2014

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What are some of the expensive purchases you've made in your life? (Expensive will be relative.) [Home, cars, boats]

Q: As the owner of your expensive purchase, how much attention do you give to an expensive purchase? [Plenty! You treasure it, enjoy it, insure it, protect it, remodel it, make sure it goes through routine maintenance, etc]

Ex: My brother recently bought a new Ford Expedition. He LOVES his new car. It was an expensive purchase. He sent an email describing the features. He uploaded pictures with exterior and interior views of his car. He is doing everything in his control to take great care of it. He parks it in less populated areas of the parking lot. He was telling me last week that every three months, the leather in the car needs to be treated with some ointment. The first treatment will happen this weekend. He treasures it, enjoys it, spends time in it, talks about it, etc.

Q: God "redeemed" or bought His children. How expensive was it for God to purchase us? [He sent His Son!]

Transition: The redemption of God's children has been the overriding theme from Genesis 1 to the end of the Book of Revelation. This was God's plan all along. That's how valuable we have always been to Him. This morning, we are going to see an expression of how valuable God viewed His Israelite children and how His children celebrated Him. They understood this, and so should we. Praise is His love language, and it should be given to Him without fail – regardless of our circumstances.

So I submit to you that We can praise God in all circumstances by writing our own "song" to God that celebrates His ATTRIBUTES and the WAYS He cares for His most expensive purchase, which is you. The Israelites give us a great example to follow. As we read through today's passage, let's look for ways God cared for the children He redeemed. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Ex 15:1-10]

Observations/Process Qs-

V.1:

- Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. **The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.**"

V.2:

- The LORD is **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.

V.3:

- The LORD is **a warrior**; the LORD is his name.

V.4:

- Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea.

V.5:

- The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.

V.6:

- "Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

V.7:

- In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble.

V.8:

- By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.

V.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.'

V.10:

- But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.
- [Dry Erase Board: Ask class to identify attributes of God and the ways the attributes were manifested in order to deliver the Israelites.]
- Rhetorical Q: The Israelites were intentional to take time to praise God through a song they created. How intentional are we to carve out time to tag His attributes and the ways He delivers us?

[Read Ex 15:11-21]

V.11:

- "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

V.12:

- You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them.

V.13:

- "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

V.14:

- The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia.

V.15:

- The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away;

V.16:

- terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone— until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you bought pass by.

V.17:

- You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance— the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.

V.18:

- The LORD will reign for ever and ever.”

V.19:

- When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

V.20:

- Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.

V.21:

- Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.”
- [Dry Erase Board: Ask class to identify attributes of God and the ways the attributes were manifested in order to deliver the Israelites.]
- Observation: The Israelites are enthralled with the Lord. They have created a song to praise God. (Refer to some of the attributes and ways.) Now watch what happens...

[Read Ex 15:22-27]

V.22:

- Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.

V.23:

- When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.)

V.24:

- So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

V.25:

- Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them.

V.26:

- He said, “If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.”

V.27:

- Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.
- Q: Why do you think there is such a disconnect going on? The Israelites were praising God, dancing with tambourines, and now they’re grumbling. What’s up with that? [Wiersbe: The Jews were worldly, thinking only of bodily satisfaction; they were walking by sight]
- Observation: How we respond to life trials either reveals that we are walking by faith or by sight. As Wiersbe says, “Life is a great laboratory, and each experience x-rays our hearts to reveal what we really are.”

LOOK:

The most expensive purchase God ever made was when He bought YOU. He redeemed YOU. Do you realize that He has a vested interest in you?! Look at examples of His attributes and ways He's delivered us (See DEB). Can you see how:

1. He treasures you
2. He enjoys you
3. He protects you
4. He insures you
5. He maintains you
6. He remodels you

Call to Action: Identify a recent difficult circumstance you were in that has resolved. Compose a "song" by reflecting on the variety of ways God worked in the situation to deliver you, His most expensive purchase. God is worthy of our praise, and He will relish whatever time you and I are willing to spend to show Him the love!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ex 15:1-27)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

III. Israel Praising in Triumph (15:1–21)

This is the first recorded song in the Bible, significantly coming after redemption from bondage. Only the Christian has a right to sing songs of redemption (Ps. 40:1–3). Exodus began with sighing (2:23), but because of redemption, we now see the nation singing. Note that this song exalts God, for the Lord is referred to at least forty-five times in these eighteen verses. Too many songs exalt men instead of the Person and holy character of God, and His wonderful works of power.

Note the key refrain in v. 2. It is repeated in Ps. 118:14, at the time the Jews returned from captivity and rebuilt the temple under Ezra, as well as in Isa. 12:2, referring to that day in the future when God will restore the nation to their land. See Isa. 11:15–16. Israel sang this song when delivered from Egypt, led by Moses the prophet and when delivered from Babylon, led by Ezra, a priest. They will yet sing it when delivered from the Gentile nations, when they turn to Christ, their king.

We will not linger over the details of this song. Note that they praised God for His redemption (vv. 1–10), guidance (vv. 11–13), and victory (vv. 14–17). And the song ends on a note of glory, looking ahead to His eternal reign (v. 18). Miriam led the women (see 1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim. 2:11–12) in a separate choir, for certainly women have reason to praise the Lord for the redemption He has given them in Christ.

IV. Israel Complaining in Unbelief (15:22–27)

It would be wonderful to linger at the seaside and praise the Lord, but the believer is a pilgrim and must follow God's leading. How strange that God should lead them to a place without water. Yet God must discipline His children so that they may discover their own hearts. When the Jews did see water, they discovered that it was bitter, and immediately they complained to Moses and to God. How wicked the human heart is! We praise God one day for His glorious salvation and then complain to Him the first time we find bitter waters. This experience taught the people of Israel some valuable lessons:

A. About life.

Life is a combination of the bitter and the sweet, triumphs and trials. If we are following God, however, we never need fear what comes our way. And after the trial there is often a spiritual "Elim" (v. 27) where God refreshes us. We must accept the bitter waters with the sweet, knowing that God knows what is best for us.

B. About themselves.

Life is a great laboratory, and each experience x-rays our hearts to reveal what we really are. The waters of Marah revealed that the Jews were worldly, thinking only of bodily satisfaction; they were walking by sight, expecting to be satisfied by the world; they were ungrateful, complaining to God when trials came their way.

C. *About the Lord.*

God knows the need because He plans the way. He used the tree (suggesting the cross, 1 Peter 2:24) to make the bitter waters sweet. He is Jehovah-Rapha, “The Lord Who Heals.”

Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 2, pp. 132–134). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. THE PRAISE BY MOSES AND MIRIAM FOR DELIVERANCE (15:1–21)

The groaning and crying of the Israelites (14:10–12) turned to worship as they were led by Moses (15:1–18) and his sister Miriam (vv. 19–21) in triumphal praise to the Lord.

a. *The praise by Moses (15:1–18)*

This poem of praise has three main sections (vv. 1–6, 7–11, 12–16) and a conclusion (vv. 17–18). At the end of each section certain words are repeated: “Your right hand, O LORD” (v. 6); “who is like You?” (v. 11) “until ... people ... pass by” (v. 16).

15:1–6. In the first section the theme is immediately stated—the destruction of the Egyptian army in **the sea** (v. 1; cf. v. 4). Moses acknowledged the great **strength** (v. 2; cf. v. 13) and **power** (v. 6; cf. v. 16) of the only true **God** in bringing about such an awesome deliverance (**salvation**). For that reason Moses said God caused him to rejoice (**He is ... my song**).

15:7–11. This second section details the crushing of the Egyptians by God. These verses stress the mighty power of God (**the greatness of Your majesty**, v. 7) in controlling the elements and in using them to destroy His adversaries. **The blast of Your nostrils** (v. 8) refers to the wind that parted the sea, and the words **You blew with Your breath** (v. 10) refer to the wind that collapsed the billowed water; these are poetic anthropomorphisms. The Egyptians, confident of victory (v. 9), arrogantly charged against Israel, but in the minutest expense of divine energy God utterly destroyed them (**they sank like lead**; cf. v. 5, “they sank ... like a stone”). Recognition of God’s mighty works led Moses to extol the Lord’s uniqueness: **Who is like You?** (Cf. Pss. 35:10; 71:19; 77:13; 89:6; 113:5; Micah 7:18.) No one is like Him **in holiness and glory**.

15:12–18. Then Moses described the consequences of Israel’s deliverance by such a great God. As a result of this marvelous triumph by His **right hand** (cf. v. 6) God in His **unfailing love** (*hesed*, “loyal love”) would then lead His own into His **holy dwelling** in the Promised Land. Another result was that other nations would fear Israel, especially those lands Israel was about to enter. The greatness of Egypt had been effaced, her land ravished, her people left in mourning, and her army destroyed. Other nations, hearing of the power of the Israelites’ God, would cower in fear. **People of Philistia**, mentioned first, would have been some of the first ones to have heard of the Red (Reed) Sea crossing. **Edom** was located south and east of the Dead Sea, and **Moab** was immediately north of Edom. According to Joshua’s account of the Conquest, the Canaanites had a predisposed fear of the Israelites (cf. Deut. 2:25; Josh. 2:9–11, 24; 5:1).

Moses’ triumphal song includes the assurance (Ex. 15:17) that God would **bring** His people into the Promised Land and to Jerusalem, **the mountain of God’s inheritance**, where His presence would be evident in **the sanctuary**. Moses also affirmed the fact that **the LORD will reign** over His people **forever**. God is to be praised for what He did in effecting a mighty

deliverance, for what He was then doing in preparing the land for conquest, and for what He will do in His eternal reign.

b. The song by Miriam (15:19–21)

15:19–21. Though at first glance verse 19 may seem to be misplaced in the narrative, it purposefully repeats the reason for such joyful praise—the defeat of the Egyptian army in **the sea** (cf. v. 1) and the deliverance of **the Israelites**. This verse has three clauses each ending (in Heb.) with the word **sea**. **Miriam** (cf. Num. 12:1–2) is the first woman in the Bible to be called a **prophetess**. Micah suggested that she, along with Moses and Aaron, had a significant leadership role in Israel’s wilderness wanderings (Micah 6:4). Since Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 7:7), Miriam was probably in her 90s because she was a young girl when Moses was born (2:4, 7–9). She and **the women** with her danced **with tambourines** (cf. 1 Sam. 18:6) as she **sang** a joyful reply to Moses’ song of God’s triumph over the Egyptians (cf. Ex. 15:21 with v. 1).

4. THE JOURNEY TO MOUNT SINAI (15:22–18:27)

Having been miraculously redeemed from bondage, God’s people were full of praise. But now they faced the wilderness. Would the joy of deliverance and the knowledge of their God give them inner strength to face the trials that lay before them? This section of the book describes the travels of the people from the Red (Reed) Sea to Mount Sinai, a three-month journey (19:1). The rest of the book (chaps. 19–40) describes God’s dealings with the people during the encampment there.

a. The provision of water at Marah (15:22–27)

15:22–26. Leaving the lakes region the Israelites entered **the Desert of Shur** in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. That desert was also called the Desert of Etham (Num. 33:8). Traveling southward the Israelites went **three days ... without ... water** until **they came to Marah** (probably present-day Ain Hawarah). But **they could not drink the water** there **because it was bitter**. So they complained **against Moses**. This response is amazing in light of their recent deliverance and triumphal songs of worship. They were so privileged; yet hardship quickly induced them to impugn **Moses** (cf. Ex. 14:10–12; 16:2; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:11, 41).

The sight of undrinkable water greatly discouraged **the people**, but God responded mercifully to Moses’ prayer and made **the water** drinkable (Ex. 15:25). The **wood** that Moses tossed **into the water** did not have a magical effect on the **water**; it was simply a symbolic act in anticipation of God’s working a miracle (like Moses lifting his staff over the sea, 14:16).

Then the Lord gave the people a simple principle: obedience brings blessing, and disobedience brings judgment. The **diseases** (cf. Deut. 7:15; 28:60) may refer to the plagues, or more likely, to boils (cf. Deut. 28:27) common to the Delta region of Egypt. The sweetening of the water with a branch was another of God’s miracles for keeping His people safe. Today the oasis at Ain Hawarah has only bitter water.

15:27. From Marah the people went **to Elim**, probably Wadi Gharandel about seven miles south of Marah, where there was abundant **water** and shade as is true today. **There were 12 springs and 70 palm trees at Elim**. Exactly how long the people **camped there** is not stated. Perhaps Moses’ knowledge of the region helped the people locate Elim.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 108 – 110). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

15:3 Is God a “man of war” or the God of peace (Rm 15:33) and love (2 Co 13:11–14; 1 Jn 4:8, 16)? According to the Bible, He is all of these. Just as human beings, made in the image of God (Gn 1:26–27), are capable of participating in war yet also of working for peace, so God can and does do the same. As the God of perfect justice (Gn 18:25; Ps 145:17), He will not let evil behavior go unpunished. When appropriate, He acts decisively against wrongdoers. God’s acts that put an end to the activities of the wicked are expressions of His perfect love for both them and their victims. His acts of judgment bring about a greater peace.

15:11 Some have suggested that the OT teaches henotheism (the worship of only one God, though many exist) rather than monotheism (the worship of the only God who exists). Certainly the writer knew that people worshiped many different gods (12:12; 23:13, 32), but that is not to say he believed these other gods actually existed.

To the contrary, one of the great teachings in the Bible is that there is one, and only one, God (Dt 6:4; Mal 2:10; 1 Co 8:5–6; Gl 4:8; Eph 4:6), who is the creator of the entire universe (Gn 1:1; Jn 1:3; Rm 11:36; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). At the same time, the Bible teaches that God created spiritual beings, and that people are inclined to worship them (Col 2:18; Rv 19:10). These God-created spirit beings possess superhuman powers (2 Kg 19:35) and can appear impressive (Jdg 13:6, 20; Acts 12:7; 2 Co 11:14). Among the created beings in the spiritual order are those who now live in rebellion against God (2 Pt 2:4). It is possible for people to believe they are worshiping a god while worshiping a powerful demonic being instead (2 Co 11:14; Col 2:18).

Some people may treat an object manufactured by a craftsman as though it were a god (Is 44:9–19; 45:20). But such objects are obviously not God, and are infinitely inferior to the true God, who stands without peer in the spiritual realm. All worship of created things is prohibited in the Bible (see Ex 20:4–5; Lv 26:1; Dt 4:15–19; 5:8).

15:20 If women are supposed to be silent and not teach or have authority over men in churches (1 Co 14:34–35; 1 Tm 2:11–12), why was Miriam a prophetess? Apart from the fact that Miriam lived before there were churches, being a prophetess is not the same as being the pastor of a church. A prophet or prophetess is simply one who receives a message from God and passes it along to others. Though some women—as well as some men—were false prophets (Neh 6:14; Ezk 13:17; Rev 2:20), others were genuine spokespersons for God (Jdg 4:4; 2 Kg 22:14; Is 8:3; Lk 2:36; Acts 21:9). Women acting as prophets is part of God’s plan (Jl 2:28), and the apostle Paul assumed that women would perform this act in church services (1 Co 11:5).