

The Song of Redemption

Exodus 15:1-21

Introduction

Where are songs that sing like this?

God! the eternal, awful name
That the whole heav'nly army fears,
That shakes the wide creation's frame,
And Satan trembles when he hears.

Like flames of fire his servants are,
And light surrounds his dwelling-place;
But, O ye fiery flames! Declare
The brighter glories of his face.

'Tis not for such poor worms as we
To speak so infinite a thing;
But your immortal eyes survey
The beauties of your sovereign King.

Tell how he shows his smiling face,
And clothes all heav'n in bright array;
Triumph and joy run through the place,
And songs eternal as the day.¹⁰

Sadly we are slowly losing a grand heritage of worship in song that sounds like the Bible. Bless God for many who, while understanding the need for simple music, are penning deep and doctrinal lyrics. Who would sing today our text?

Moses had stood before the Pharaoh and spoke the command from God. "Let my people go that they may worship Me." The fulfillment of the command to the Pharaoh is inaugurated here. Having been delivered from Egypt and having passed through the Red Sea, the people of God now fully enter into and enjoy the worship of God. Our text is the song of Moses. It is the worship of the redeemed gathered safe from the damnation and the destruction of Egypt.

Note: *the text has a definite chiasmic structure which I have attempted to reflect in the message.*

- Personal - Acclaim God's Present Graces (v.1-3)
 - Punishment - Realize God's Past Judgments (v.4-10)
 - Person - Celebrate God's Sovereign Power (v.11-13)
 - Punishment - Rest in God's Sure Protection (v.14-16a)
- Personal - Anticipate God's Future Glories (v.17-18)

Has your heart resonated with our praise this morning? Have the mighty saving acts of God filled your worship? This text is for you for this morning. Let's ask God to use it as a tool to shape our hearts and sweeten our songs.

¹⁰Isaac Watts, *The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1998).

Acclaim God's Present Grace**(v.1-3)**

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.

² 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.

³ The LORD is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.

What a marvelous thing God has ordained – the union of worship and music. God's people are a singing people. We respond to God and His mighty acts with songs of praise and worship. Having been delivered through the waters of the Red Sea they sing this song of redemption. Verse 1 is mirrored in verse 20. Moses leads the men and Miriam leads the women. This is antiphonal; that is, the women are echoing the lines sung by the men. Now to get a sense of this imagine over 1.5 million adults raising their voices with the women shaking their tambourines. What a mighty ocean-wave roar of praise arises up to God.

In this song we see a pattern, an example of the music and worship of God's people. From it, we can learn much about what shapes and sends heavenward God exalting praise.

Moved by God's Acts**(v.1)**

We acclaim God's present grace because we are moved by God's mighty acts. Worshipping creatures have often responded to them with song. On the day of creation the morning stars sang together (Job 38:7). When the Temple was dedicated and the Ark arrived, great choirs led the worship. When Jesus was born in the incarnation, the angels worshipped in song (Luke 1-2). Now that the Word and Spirit have come, we worship by singing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:6).

We are moved by God's acts to declare in our worship the glory of His triumph. Remember that they are standing on a shore littered with the drowned bodies and mangled chariots of Egypt's slaughtered army. This motif of God as victorious warrior runs all through the Bible. While it may grate on politically correct modern sensibilities and may sound horribly like the evil jeering of Islamic-fascists, those are all perversions of the glorious truth that Yahweh wins in the end.

Owned in Relationship**(v.2)**

We acclaim God's present grace because we own a relationship with Him. He is all these things – song, salvation strength. The great worship-driving word here is the personal possessive pronoun, "my". He is my salvation, my song, my strength, my God. We may and we ought to worship God in all that He declares He is to us. This idea that we can think of God in a personal relationship is utterly unique to the Scriptures. Other religions think of their gods in ways that do not allow and certainly do not encourage this kind of language.

This relationship is with the LORD God. It is not one with our buddy in heaven. Therefore the primary verbs of our worship are "praise" and "exalt".

TO PRAISE is to commend another by speaking of their character and conduct out of admiration and affection. I can praise my wife in a way that causes you to think well of her. This is what we do in praise of God. We sing both to Him and to others. In our song, we say what is true about God so as to express our admiration and affection for Him. We do so in a way that draws others to respond with us. While we do say things like, “We praise you” that in and of itself is not praise. Praise is to say things like this song.

TO EXALT is to lift another up so that they are seen and savored as greater than ourselves. We exalt God by singing truth about His glorious person, His mighty acts, His wonderful character and our true experiences with Him. We say by singing truth in such a way that God is magnified, He is made much of and made larger. He is magnified, not because He is small but because our vision is dim. To exalt Him is to lift Him up. Again, we may say, “We exalt you,” but worship says what is true of God and us that actually affirms what is already true – He is exalted.

Humbled by God's Character

(v.3)

We will acclaim God’s present graces when we are humbled by God’s eminent character. These two phrases assert who God is out of a humbled and grateful heart. His magnificent character is being declared in their history and by His name. In His character as LORD, He is a warrior. He fights for justice. He defends His people. In His character as LORD, He upholds His reputation. His fame and His glory are at stake.

Thus our worship must arise from humbled hearts. Our rejoicing must never in some even small way reflect back to exalt ourselves. We must ever turn the gaze of our souls and the songs of our worship upward and outward to God. Yes, we sing to each other about God. But we do so, not in some way to affirm each other, but to adore God and thus commend Him to each other.

So God’s present graces move us to worship God as a people who may say, “My God” with humble and passionate hearts.

Realize God's Past Judgments**(v.4-10)**

- ⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.
- ⁵ The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
- ⁶ Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,
your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.
- ⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
- ⁸ 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.
- ⁹ 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.'
- ¹⁰ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Here is an element of worship songs sprinkled throughout the Psalms but conspicuously missing from modern Christian music. Where are songs that focus on God's judgments in the past?

In Recorded/Observed History**(v.4-5)**

The songs sung by God's people are rooted in history and reality. Moses is leading Israel to rejoice in God's mighty acts in time and space. They observe the actual destruction of Egypt. They heard the confusion and the cries through the night. They watch the sad scene as bodies wash up on the shore. They hear the haunting calls of the circling vultures. This is the living, breathing moment where they are standing.

Now, let me express a concern here that can go down slope either way. There are two tendencies in worship down through the history of worship music. One is to make God so transcendent, so outside and apart from history that our worship songs no longer celebrate the real working of God in history. The second tendency is towards man-centered worship in a way that fails to exalt God. The effect is that our worship is so about us that it is no longer primarily about God. This is not what we see in the song of Moses.

Through Divine Action**(v.6-8)**

So the terrible destruction of Egyptian might is through Divine action. The destruction of the Egyptian army is not an accident of nature. It is not some random or chance event. While their song celebrates what actually happened, there is a Godward interpretation. He has moved in His power to deliver His people. What has happened here is the evident judgment of God.

Even in judgment, God is seen to majestic and glorious. His right hand gloriously shatters the enemy. His majesty moves in fury. There is no sense of God being a petty tyrant who has lost His temper at some trivial slight. Here is the majestic God moving with massive and measured wrath against those who have defamed His Name and threatened His people. And this is sung in language moving and stately.

So, God's people hear what God declares and promises. They experience God's moving in their situations. They look at the events surrounding them and interpret them through a God-centered lens. This interpretation fills their songs. God is praised by words echoed from a million voices. What an example for Christian lyricists and musicians down through the ages. What a needed corrective to so much of our insipid, theology deprived, religious music today. How grateful we should be for our folks who work hard at leading us to and through great songs of the past and the present.

Overcoming Sinful Rebellion (v.9-10)

Their song commemorates the saving acts of God which overcome sinful rebellion. You hear the willful pride and rebellion of the Egyptians. They have ridden out of the ruins of a nine month losing war against God. Their crops are destroyed. Their land lays waste. Their firstborn are cold in the ground. But they will keep right on. They will not submit. They will not turn back. They will win.

Over against the enemy that speaks, God blows with His wind. The wind of God that dried the way for Israel now causes the standing walls of water to fall. Under the crashing deluge, they sink and drown and die.

So, God's mighty acts of judgment in the past fill our songs. A majestic and holy God whose mercy saves His people and whose wrath destroys the enemy, is our salvation and our song.

Celebrate God's Sovereign Power (v.11-13)

¹¹ "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?

Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

¹² You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.

¹³ You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

At the center of the song of Moses God's sovereign power and majesty are celebrated. This is where the crescendo is. This is where the worship is at its highest.

In His Glorious Majesty (v.11-12)

God's sovereign power is celebrated in His glorious majesty. In the form of two questions, God is shown to be incomparable. Here is a chance for the antiphony to echo the answer. Who is like our God? Who is like Him among the gods? Who is like Him in Who He is? Who is like Him in all He does? No one. None. God is utterly unique. There are no other gods. There are no other Divine majesties. There are no others holy in all their being and doing. There are no others awesome in brightness. There are no others doing wonders. God is God alone in His glorious majesty and transcendent aseity.

Because of His Covenant Love (v.13)

God's sovereign power is celebrated because of His covenant love. This great, majestic, gloriously holy God loves the people He redeems. This love is steadfast and unchanging. It is the motivating ground for the good and grace to His people.

The deliverance God has wrought for His people does not come as a by-stander observing a stranger's danger and rushing to their aid. No, He has chosen to love the unlovely. His love for His people wraps His promises around His faithfulness so that all He does is in good for them.

God's covenant love involves Him in their lives. Israel recognizes that God has led them all along the way. He brought Abraham out of Ur and into the Promised Land. He brought Joseph and then the tribes down into Egypt those long four hundred years ago. He has brought them out and led them the long way around to the edge of the Red Sea. He has led them through the waters safely to the other side. In His love and with His power God has guided and guarded His people. This is worth singing about!

Many great hymns of the past and the present celebrate God's sovereign power. Many great old lyrics are falling into disuse being set to tunes we find difficult to sing. Many good musicians are starting to comb through these great songs and to set them to modern tunes to keep these truths alive and the worship deep.

Rest in God's Sure Protection

(v.14-16)

¹⁴ The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.

¹⁵ Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

¹⁶ 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.

Now the song follows faith's heavenly logic. God's people sing of resting in God's sure protection for He is the One who led them and delivered them along the way.

Bringing Fear in the Wicked

(v.14-16a)

What a great thing to sing and what a great way to sing it. The nations hear of what God has done to protect His people. They then are frozen in fear. They tremble lest they feel Yahweh's mighty hand. They melt away in hiding. The nations here are those through whose land Israel must pass on the way to the Promised Land. The deliverance by God from the Egyptians brings the awe of worship to God's people. It also brings the fear of destruction to God's enemies.

Bringing Safety for the Redeemed

(v.16b)

By faith, God's people sing of the sure protection that brings safety for the redeemed. As Israel passes by, see the mighty throng journeying along the way. See the massive pillar of glorious light. See the enemy slink away. Ah, this is what it means to be God's people. This is what it means for God to lead and protect.

So we may rest in God's sure protection. We should express it in our singing. We should celebrate by faith the God will guide and guard until we arrive safely home.

Anticipate God's Future Glories

(v.17-18)

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ The LORD will reign forever and ever."

In this stanza, earth and heaven are mixed as the song anticipates God's future glories.

In His Dwelling

(v.17)

Moses sings of God bringing His people into the mountain of God, to the sanctuary of God, to the place where God dwells. Yes, there is an earthly sense of that in the Promised Land, Jerusalem, and the Temple. But even all that is seen by faith. Moses cannot know now what will not unfold until King David and King Solomon's day. But through the prophetic word, he sings about God's future glories. Those future glories will culminate in God's people dwelling with God and God with them.

Beyond the days when these longings were fulfilled under the rule of David and Solomon, there would yet be a greater fulfillment. God would dwell in Christ and walk among His people. After His death, resurrection and ascension, God would dwell in His people by the Holy Spirit. But there will come a day when this will all be culminated in the new heavens and new earth. Then the tabernacle of God is with man and it is finished!

So sing songs of journeying safely. Sing songs of God with us and us with God. Sing songs of going home to heaven. And sing songs of eternal joys.

Under His Dominion

(v.18)

Moses closes his song with a triumphant phrase oft echoed in the worship music of God's people. "The Lord will reign forever and ever." We should fill our songs with what it means to live at peace and in joy under the rule of God. This is a holy and happy privilege. It is a damnable thing to turn the glorious rule of God into some terrible weight. We have been released from our sins. We have been transformed from the realm of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. What may be frightful to the ungodly is in fact fulsome and rich to His people.

God's people will stand and sing in happy joy in the dwelling place of God under His dominion. That glad song of praise will go on as long as God reigns.

¹⁹ For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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."

As we think about this song of redemption shaping how we worship and what we sing about, notice that we praise God for: **Conclusion**

For Who He is to me (v. 1-3). Here are songs that focus on His attributes, on the person and character of God.

For what He has accomplished (v. 4-10). Here are songs that focus on His actions, on what God has done for our good and for His glory.

For why He has delivered (v. 11-13). Here are songs that focus on His motivations, on what is in the heart of God that moves Him.

For what He will do (v. 14-18). Here are songs that focus on His future good for us based on His purposes, plans and promises.

Because of this being a type of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-5) the New Covenant reality is the victory over sin and self, not victory over sinners. This is not a foundation for domionistic triumphalism. It is the type of the victory of Romans 6-8. The death and resurrection of Christ brings victory over sin by our being placed into Christ and our union with Him with its resulting deliverance from Egypt (the realm of the flesh) and into the realm of the Spirit (wilderness->Promised Land=present till glory). Just as the wind of God prepared the way through the waters and brought down the judgment waters upon the Egyptians, so the breath, the Spirit of God, brings us through the death and resurrection of Christ and judges our rebellious old selves so that we may be delivered from the enslaving power of sin. Thus we begin our pilgrimage through the wilderness where we go through trials and temptations to see if we will obey God from the heart.

Jesus' second coming as Sovereign Lord will bring the final victory over sinners and Satan. This song is also sung on the day of the outpouring of God's wrath in the book of Revelation chapter 15. The mighty host of Revelation 7:9-14, those who have conquered, sing the song of Moses. They too have been finally delivered beyond the sea of glass and there praise the God who had brought them redemption and is about to deliver the ungodly into their final ruin.

So let us sing the song of the redeemed. Let us sing of God. Let us do so with great gladness. Let us do so till we die. Let us do so as long as He reigns. Let us do so, forever.