

Sing to the LORD

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[0 : 00] It would be great if you could grab that Bible reading that Gwyneth read for us. Let me start by saying that songs are often used to celebrate situations, aren't they?

Such that they engage our emotions and we can feel the occasion or we can express our emotions for the occasion. And that's what songs do. They connect with our hearts, if you like.

Take this piece of music. Apologies to those online. Despite our streaming license, YouTube pays havoc, so I don't think you'll be able to hear these.

But for those in the room, have a listen to this piece of music that is played for the coronation of each British monarch. Have a listen. And may have announced the generations tooter Sergeant Willie Africans, And all the people did show my eyes.

Can you feel the pomp and ceremony just from the music? I mean, no one does pomp and ceremony quite like the Brits, do they?

[1 : 37] But songs don't just help us to engage our emotions. Sometimes they celebrate a victory and praise those who won it. Have a listen to this next one.

See if you recognize it. See the bombers fly up to win the pre-vicious flight.

All right, I think I just made maybe two people really happy and the rest of you are going to kill me later. Well, today we come to a chapter which is called the Song of Moses, or the song that the Israelites sang that celebrates God's victory and praises him for it.

This is actually the second response we've seen to them being saved from Egypt. Last week we saw their first response, which was to fear God reverently.

And we talked a bit about that last week. But today it's to sing to the Lord in praise. You see how verse one starts? Because they've just come through the other side of the Red Sea.

[2 : 44] Then, notice the word then, so it's a response, Moses and the Israelites sang this song. Although having said that, it probably started with Miriam.

So just skip down for a moment to the bottom of your page, to verse 19. Verse 19 summarizes what we saw last week. 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. Then Miriam, the prophet or prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them, sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted, both horse and driver. He is hurled into the sea.

Here Miriam is called a prophet or a prophetess, probably because she wrote some or all of this song, which prophesies, that it speaks truths about God.

[3 : 48] And so what seems to have happened, you might notice that her line in verse 21 is very similar to the first line in verse 1. And so what seems to have happened was Miriam, the older sister of both Aaron and Moses, and at this stage of the narrative is a sprightly 90 years old, starts singing and dancing and the other women follow.

Clearly she wasn't a Baptist. Baptists don't dance. I can say that because there are a lot of ex-Baptists here. But anyway, but clearly she is overwhelmed by praise, isn't she?

And she calls on them or sang to them, verse 21, that is to the women who followed her and Moses and the rest of the men, telling them to sing to the Lord.

And then in verse 1, Moses and the Israelites all reply, I will sing to the Lord. And off they go with their song. Perhaps Miriam repeated her bit like a refrain or a chorus at various points through the song.

We don't know exactly how it worked, but that's one way. But it doesn't matter how it worked. What matters is the song they sang, which is why the writer begins with it.

[5 : 07] And it's a victory song that firstly sings about God. So have a look at verse 2. The Lord is my strength and my defense.

He has become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him. My father's God and I will exalt him. And now verse 1, this clearly tells us it's a victory song, by the way.

You know, he is highly exalted. It can also mean he triumphed triumphantly. And the fact that horse and driver has been hurled in the sea means God is victorious. It's a victory song. But it begins by speaking about God.

And here that God is their personal God who saved them. Did you notice all the personal pronouns? My strength, my defense, my salvation.

I will praise him. I will exalt him. You see, like we heard last week on the next slide, after they were delivered, they feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses, his servant.

[6 : 17] And so now he's not just their father's God, you know, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But he's now their own personal God, my strength, my God, my salvation.

And not just as a nation, but as individuals. They each, it seems, has a personal relationship with God. And it's the same for us today as Christians, isn't it? For when we put our trust in God and his son, Jesus, then God saves us and he becomes our God.

But it actually is more personal than that than it was for the Jews because we have access to him and he becomes like our heavenly father. We're so used to hearing that that we forget what a privilege it is.

The Jews weren't able to call God their heavenly father. And as a father cares for their children, so God cares for us, working for our good, even when we can't always see it.

I had one of those experiences yesterday with one of my kids, actually. I was asking them to do something for their good and they just couldn't see it. I won't tell you what happened next, but anyway. But who is this God?

[7 : 29] Well, he's their personal God who saved them, which is why they praise him, not just corporately by singing the song together, but individually by saying, I will praise him.

I will exalt him. But God is not just their personal God who saved them. He's also their warrior God who fought for them. Have a look at verse 3 to 5.

The Lord is a warrior. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea.

The deep waters have covered them. They sank to the depths like a stone. I notice the word Lord is in capitals, and that's because it's his personal name, Yahweh.

It's the name that God gave Israel that reminds them he is their God. But here he's also called their warrior God, isn't he?

[8 : 25] In verse 3. You see, Pharaoh's chariots were like the military tanks of the ancient world, and his best officers like special forces troops.

These were the might of the ancient world in terms of military prowess. And yet when they come up against God the warrior, what happens?

They're no match. Kind of like this image I saw on the next slide, of this little kid taking on this other guy. I had to kind of put extra pants on them just to make them a bit more modest.

But who do you think is going to win that wrestling match? It's obvious, isn't it? The kid is no match, nor was Egypt for God. And so this song begins singing about who God is.

He is their personal God who saved them, but he's also their warrior God who fought for them. And it's this second aspect that the rest of the song seems to focus on. And so they move from singing about God now to singing to God, praising him for his victory over Israel.

[9 : 32] So point two, verse six. Notice the change in pronouns. They're talking to God now. Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy.

In the greatness of your majesty, you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger. It consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils, the waters piled up.

The surging waters stood up like a wall. The deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. And notice in verse six that while the Egyptians are called the enemy, that is Israel's enemy, we're also told in verse seven that they opposed you, God.

In other words, to be an enemy of God's people is to be an enemy of God himself. And again, such opposition, though, is futile. For we're told that God shatters them like a piece of glass is easily shattered.

Or it consumes them like they're simply stubble, easily burnt up. And with just a breath of his nostrils, the waters congeal like walls of jelly.

[10:43] And with another breath, the waters come back over the Egyptians such that they sink like lead. You see verse 10? But you blew with your breath and the sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the mighty waters. And so with such a decisive victory, no wonder they then sing in verse 11, Who among the gods is like you, Lord?

Who is like you? Majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders. You see, such a decisive victory over the enemy shows there is no one like God.

He is the mighty warrior, the true God, the true king, who, verse 18, reigns forever and ever.

And yet, celebrating and singing about this warrior God, who obliterates this enemy, can feel a bit wrong, can't it?

[11:43] A bit politically incorrect. But I think that's because we've forgotten how arrogant and evil this enemy was. Have a look at verse 9 that we skipped over.

The enemy boasted, Do you see their arrogance?

Do you see their evil? It's like this. The Egyptian soldiers are running after them. They're all talking to each other. What are they going to do?

I'm going to pursue them. I'm going to overtake them. I'm going to divide the spoils. I'm going to gorge on their flesh. I'm going to destroy them. Is this not evil?

Not to mention their previous abuse of Israel or the genocide of the infants in the Nile. Hitler and the Nazis arrogantly claimed to be the master race, if you remember.

[12:52] And they committed unspeakable acts of evil, including genocide of the Jews. And so when the Allied forces defeated this evil enemy, there was great celebrations.

Even singing and dancing in the streets. And there was no sense that these celebrations were inappropriate or politically incorrect.

For this arrogant and evil enemy had been defeated. And the soldiers could now come home. Well, so too here with this song of praise.

You see, it is right to celebrate God's just victory over evil. It's why those already in heaven from our second reading join in the song of Moses as they see God execute justice over evil.

And we get that sense too, don't we? When we see justice dark. I remember driving down Doncaster Road. I think it was just passing Tunstall Square Coles. And this other driver came up the inside lane and cut across in front of me, nearly clipped my car.

[14:02] And, you know, I was very tempted to honk the horn. Actually, I might have honked the horn. But anyway, but this further down Mitchum Road, I saw a police car had pulled over that car. And I just drive past.

When justice is done, there is a sense of that's right. I mean, if a judge let criminals go and evil perpetrated, we'd be up in arms.

That's right to sing of God's just victory here. But what's more, this decisive victory over Egypt guaranteed the journey home for Israel.

Point three, verse 13. In your unflinching love, you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength, you will guide them to your holy dwelling. The nations will hear and tremble.

Anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edens will be terrified. The leaders of Noah will be seized with trembling. The people of Canaan will melt away. Terror and dread will fall on them.

[15:01] By the power of your arm, they will be as still as a stone. Until your people pass by, Lord. Until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance.

The place, Lord, you have made for your dwelling. The sanctuary, Lord. Your hands established.

The Lord reigns forever and ever. Here, the Israelites now move to sing about how the surrounding nations will react to God's decisive victory over Egypt.

And how do they react? Well, scared stiff, aren't they? Did you notice all the words to do with fear?

You know, tremble, gripped with anguish, terrified, seized with trembling, terror, dread and so on.

And then verse 16, they will be as still as a stone. Scared stiff, we say. And that means then they won't lift a finger against Israel.

Israel's journey home to God's dwelling place in the promised land is secure, you see. It's guaranteed. So certain, in fact, that Israel sings actually with a mix of past and present.

[16:12] Sorry, past and future tenses, which the English hasn't picked up. So on the next slide, they actually sing. The nations have heard past tense. Even though it's just happened.

They're still on the side of the sea. And would tremble and anguish has gripped past tense. The people of Philistia, even though they haven't heard about it yet. The chief of Edom are terrified. Past tense. The people of Canaan have melted away. Israel is still standing at the edge of the sea. It's only just happened. It's only just happened. Yet so decisive is God's victory that they're certain the other nations are going to be scared stiff when they hear.

And their journey home will be guaranteed. Again, it's like World War II. On the 6th of June, 1944 was D-Day when the Allied troops landed in Normandy, France, and defeated the Nazis in a decisive battle.

And that's why that day, that particular D-Day is famous. Because on that day, the victory was so decisive, it guaranteed the outcome of the war.

[17:22] I guess that there was still another year that they had to kind of do battles as pockets of German resistance continued. And it wasn't until the 8th of May, 1945, that is V-E Day, Victory in Europe Day, that it was completely done and dusted.

But the D-Day, the decisive victory, guaranteed their rest on V-E Day. And it was so to hear God's defeat of Egypt was D-Day, the decisive victory that guaranteed Israel would make it to V-E Day, rest in the promised land.

Oh, sure, it would take some time to get to the land, and they'd still have to face some battles as other nations opposed them. But God's victory over Egypt was so decisive, it guaranteed they'd make it.

Their journey home and rest in their promised land was certain. No wonder Israel sings praises to God. Of course, like last week, this victory points to an even greater victory through Christ.

For our enemies are not evil Egyptians, but death and the devil. People say death is natural. I don't know if you've heard people say that, it's just natural part of life.

[18:38] But I'm actually not sure it is, because God didn't design us like that. He designed us to live in relationship. And in fact, death begins taking life from us through disease and decay.

You know, when you're sick, you kind of miss out on life, don't you? And then it takes life from us completely at the end. And in doing so, it destroys relationships with loved ones and causes heartache.

Death is evil. And so too is the devil. His mission is to see us suffer eternal judgment. That's not particularly nice, is it?

And so he tempts us with lies like, ah, this God stuff can't be real. Or, look how much you're suffering. God can't be trusted. That we might walk away from God and miss out on life eternal. And he also accuses us of being sinners who deserve eternal judgment. So that we might suffer for eternity. That's his mission. He's evil. But he is right about us being sinners.

[19:45] And yet at the cross, Jesus paid for our sins and rose again. That was his decisive victory. Proving he defeated both death and the devil.

You see, if Jesus paid for our sins, then, well, the devil has nothing less to accuse us of, does he? He no longer has any grounds to demand our eternal judgment. Paul puts it like this from Colossians.

On the next slide. God forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us, as the devil could do.

He has taken it away, though, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the spiritual powers and authorities, he's made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

See, the cross is Christ's decisive victory. The charge of sin we've committed has been nailed to the cross where Jesus paid it for us.

[20:55] And in so doing, Jesus triumphed over the spiritual authorities, including the devil. He disarmed them of any power to accuse us and demand our eternal judgment because Jesus has already paid it.

Done. It's like that story I may have told you before. When the famous preacher Billy Graham was much younger, he was driving through a small southern town in the U.S. when he was caught speeding. Billy didn't realize, but he admitted his guilt to the police officer who pulled him over and was told that he would have to appear in the local court to pay his fine.

He went to court that afternoon and the judge, without raising his head, simply called out, guilty or not guilty? When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, that'll be ten dollars, a dollar for every mile you went over the limit.

If only fines were that cheap today. But suddenly the judge looked up and recognized the famous preacher and he said, you've broken the law.

[21 : 55] The fine must be paid, but I'm going to pay it for you. And then he took the charge that stood against Billy, the speeding ticket, and he attached a ten dollar bill from his own wallet to it.

And then he said, declared, Billy was justified in the eyes of the court and free to go. He then took Billy out for a steak dinner. Now, our charge of sin was attached not to a ten dollar bill, but to the cross of Jesus, where Jesus paid it for us and not from his wallet, but by his blood.

And in doing so, the prosecutor, the devil, has no more power to accuse us or demand our judgment. Instead, we're justified in the eyes of God, free to go.

Free not just to enjoy a steak dinner now, but to enjoy life after death later. To rise again as Jesus did and enjoy life eternal in a new creation with all our loved ones.

You see, the cross of Jesus is our D-Day. The decisive victory over our evil enemies of death and the devil. And like Israel, is that not worth praising God for?

[23 : 09] What's more, this decisive victory guarantees our journey home to our promised land of the new creation. Oh, sure, it will take some time and we'll have to fight some battles of temptation and suffering along the way.

For the devil is defeated, but not destroyed. And yet, as God's decisive victory over Egypt guaranteed their journey for Israel, so Jesus' decisive victory at the cross guarantees our journey home too.

It's like what Jesus said on the next slide. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them from my hand. That's a pretty good guarantee, isn't it?

I had to buy a new frying pan last week and it boasts all these things, you know, durable, long-lasting, Teflon, non-stick coating. I thought with a tagline like that, the guarantee has got to be what, five, ten years?

Twelve months? Here's a guarantee that lasts forever. Or as Paul writes on the next slide, those God justified by the cross of Christ, he also glorified.

[24 : 27] Like Billy was justified in the judge's sight by the ten dollars, God has justified us in his sight by the blood of Christ. But then Paul says God has also glorified us, past tense, even though we're not yet in glory.

I mean, Doncaster is nice, but it's not that nice, is it? But so certain is it, so guaranteed is it that Paul writes it in the past tense, like the Israelites sang in the past tense.

That's why the verse goes on to say that in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, that is through Christ who loved us by dying for us.

And it's, is this guarantee not worth praising God for? That no matter how many temptations we fall into, God forgives us. That no matter what we're suffering we face, God will keep us.

All because of God's decisive victory at the cross. Is that not worth praising God for? And so can I ask, is God your personal God?

[25 : 36] Have you put your trust in him and Jesus, his son? And for us who have, will you continue to praise him for his decisive victory over our evil enemies?

Will you praise him that his victory guarantees our journey home? We can praise him by speaking about him in conversation with your family or friends.

That's what the Bible says on the next slide from Hebrews. You know, to offer God a sacrifice of praise. What is that praise? Well, the fruit of lips that openly profess his name, acknowledge his name.

You know, perhaps taking opportunities that may arise to talk with neighbors or friends or perhaps making opportunities to talk with your families. And when something happens in your family at home, you know, do we say, oh, let's, we should pray about that.

Or if they're really stressed, God's got it under control. Let's work through it and pray about it. Or do we just try and resolve the problem without any reference to God? We can praise him by speaking about him and speaking to him in prayer, not just praying for things which God wants us to do, but also thanking him for who he is and what he's done.

[26 : 55] But like Israel here, we can also praise him in song. Like fans praise their footy team by singing the team song, even Esedon. In fact, the Bible tells us to sing from Ephesians.

I'm not much of a singer. I must confess. My kids complain. I always turn the radio off in the car instead of singing along to the songs because that's what other cool dads do.

Clearly, I'm not cool. But I'll sing in church because in God's kindness, hymns don't just praise God. They encourage us, don't they?

For they engage our emotions. They help us not only to remember truth about God, but also to feel it so that we're encouraged in our Christian life.

Have you ever experienced that? You know, the congregation is belting out a hymn with music everyone can follow with great truths about God and what he's done. And it just kind of lifts you, encourages you.

[27 : 59] Singing church is a way of not only praising God, but encouraging ourselves and one another. For it not only helps us to remember the truth, but to feel it. In fact, hymns often stay with us to our old age, which encourage us.

I see it in nursing homes. You know, memories fade, but they remember the hymns and encourages it. Their eyes light up. I've seen it literally happen. It's like one man who I remember speaking to us.

He was in a really dark place. He was thinking of taking his life. But a song popped into his head that he learned at Sunday school. Do you know what that song was? Jesus loves me.

This I know for the Bible tells me so. Brought him back from the edge. So even if you're not a singer like me, can I encourage you to sing up in church?

Others will drown you out anyway. Don't worry about it. And can I sincerely thank all those involved in our music? It's a really important ministry. And if you listen to music lots, can I encourage you to listen to some good Christian music in your playlist as well?

[29 : 06] Even if you don't sing out loud, but as the verse says, you know, just make melody to the Lord in your heart. Hum along, perhaps. For it helps you not only praise God, but remember who he is, what he's done, and to feel it.

Well, this time, around this time last year, there was an autistic boy called Will Gallagher who got lost in the bush north of Melbourne. I don't know if you remember this. His enemies were the freezing temperatures and his isolation.

But a volunteer called Ben Gibbs saved him from them in a decisive victory or rescue. A news headline on the next slide says, Will Gallagher's mum full of praise for just awesome rescuer. How much more so ought we be full of praise for our awesome warrior God? Whose decisive victory rescued us and guarantees our journey home.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the decisive victory at the cross. And we thank you that because of Jesus, we can have hope of life after death, certain hope.

[30 : 30] And that you will guarantee, that you're guaranteed to bring us home. And Father, help us to remember and to praise you for who you are and what you've done. To praise you in conversations, to praise you in prayer, and to praise you in song.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.