From Suffering to Song

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[0:00] skill skill Thank you.

Thank you.

If we take a break, pick back up and finish the book of Exodus. Been enjoying teaching through this. And one of the things we've been talking about over and over is how the book of Exodus is the gospel of the Old Testament.

In fact, the events that we've just been studying the last several weeks, we've worked through the plagues, specifically the death of the firstborn. We've looked at the Passover event and the memorial that was established as a result of that last week, the crossing through the Red Sea.

And every single one of those events is getting, they're a literal event in and of themselves, but they're getting you ready for a bigger event, a greater event, namely the Exodus that Christ will lead.

[1:44] So you take, for example, the Passover. What's the Passover all about? Well, it's about a sacrifice. It's about a lamb that's being slain.

It's about blood, right? And so then that Passover gets you ready for the cross. What do you have at the cross? You have the lamb slain. You have blood.

You have the lamb. Didn't I just say the lamb? So all the things related to the Passover is really corresponding to the cross, you see? And so then you go to the crossing of the Red Sea.

And what's happening at the crossing of the Red Sea? You have Israel that is passing from death to life. Literally, they believe they're going to die as a result of the Egyptian armies coming at them.

But as a result of passing through the waters, they're going from death to life. What does that foreshadow? It foreshadows the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Paul says, we've been risen to walk in newness of life.

So if you take the Passover event and then the Red Sea, those two events are preparing you for a greater exodus, namely the cross and the empty tomb.

Are you with me? It's foreshadowing the ultimate story of salvation and redemption in the Lord Jesus. And so we've seen clearly how the book of Exodus is the gospel of the Old Testament.

It's getting you ready for Christ. Now, we're going to see how Israel responds in chapter 15 now that they have passed through the Red Sea.

So pick it up. We're just going to read two verses tonight, but we're going to cover all the way down through verse 18. So if you're able to stand, please do so as we honor the reading of God's word.

We're just going to read chapter 15, one and two, which is the response immediately following the parting of the Red Sea and the crossing through. Verse one. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to Yahweh saying, I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed graciously or gloriously.

[4:01] The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. This is my God and I will praise him.

My father's God and I will exalt him. This is God's word. So pray with me and for me as we ask God to teach us tonight. Lord, thank you for this time to come under the authority of your word.

We do ask that you would teach us, that you would encourage us. Speak to us now as we look to these words. In Jesus' name we pray. And God's people said, amen.

Amen. You can be seated. I was born a Cubs fan. I figured that'd get a reaction. Now before you misunderstand, I'm not talking about me personally.

I was not personally raised a Cubs fan. I was raised better than that. But those were actually the words of a man by the name of Matthew Westerholm.

[5:01] In an article that he wrote entitled, quote, Unashamed to Sing Lessons from a Cubs Fan. And in this article, he writes something very interesting.

He says, quote, As a kid, As a kid, I purchased baseball cards and filled my mind with players' names and statistics, while I filled my mouth with terrible baseball card chewing gum.

That gum lasted about 90 seconds. But my love for my team endures today. My passionate enthusiasm for the Cubs has led me to embrace traditions that would not normally be my style.

For example, at the end of every Cubs victory, the home stadium, Wrigley Field, is filled with the Steve Goodwin song, Go Cubs Go!

Now that's the tradition after every Cubs victory. In fact, Faith Family, on some occasions, the singing that's coming out of Wrigley Field can literally be heard from over a mile away.

[7:03] Now that is actual footage of the voices coming out of Wrigley Field heard over a mile away of people singing together, Go Cubs Go!

Now if you read the lyrics of the song, by any objective sense, you will realize it is not a lyrical masterpiece. Here's just one example.

Baseball season's underway. Well, you'd better get ready for a brand new day. Hey, Chicago, what do you say? The Cubs are gonna win today. Not a masterpiece.

No one's winning awards for those lyrics. But as Westerholm points out, that moment when all those Cub fans are gathered singing, it really isn't about the depth of the lyrics.

It's about the joy of victory. He goes on to say, quote, It is compelling to listen to tens of thousands of people singing this somewhat silly song at the top of their lungs.

[8:24] Elderly fans sing with children. Wealthy fans in luxury suites sing with working class bleacher bums.

And they're all united in the euphoria of victory. In other words, Faith Family, those fans are singing not because they love the song.

They are singing not because it's a gathering of a choir or musicians. They're singing because they won. There is something about the celebration of victory that demands a song.

And every one of you in this room knows exactly what that's like. That is, to sing not because you like the music, to sing not because you're a musician, but to sing as an expression of joy.

Amen? And maybe for you, Go Cubs Go is not your go-to. Maybe yours sounds something like this. I'm sure you're going to get a little more reaction out of you, right?

[9:37] Nobody's standing up doing this. Nobody. Fight, fight, fight, fight. Go, I need you. I know my son is back there singing along with these lyrics. Go, I need you.

You see that once again. All these people are gathered and they're singing a victory song. Maybe for you, it doesn't have anything to do with sports at all.

Maybe you don't even know how to spell the Super Bowl, but maybe it's a birthday party. You go to a birthday party and you just break out in the birthday song, which is another lyrical masterpiece.

Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear so-and-so. Happy birthday to you. A first grader could have written that song.

It is not a lyrical masterpiece. But you sing. Why do you break out in that song? It's not because you love the song. You love the person being celebrated. Or maybe for you, it's the national anthem.

[10:40] And you sing the national anthem, not because you necessarily love the song, and maybe you do love the song, but you sing for a bigger reason than love of song. You sing for love of country.

And I hope you do this at church. That you sing, not because you like the style. You sing not because you like the method, whether it's a lyric video or a praise band.

You don't sing for those reasons. You sing because you love God. Or maybe you would be the kind of person that would find yourself in such a good mood one day that you are performing your own concert in the shower.

You know what I'm talking about? Here's my point. There are times when regardless of whether or not you like music, the occasion calls for a song.

It is victory. It is joy. And that needs to be expressed. Amen? And by the way, if you're one of those people that doesn't like music at all, Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, says this to you, quote, A person who does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God must be a clodhopper and does not deserve to be called a human being.

[12:02] He should be required to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs, close quote. Now, for the rest of us that are not clodhoppers, we know that music and song in times of victory are natural expressions.

If you're with me, say amen. Amen. That's Exodus 15. Exodus 15 is simply the gathering of a people who have just experienced a mighty victory and they cannot help but sing.

In Exodus 15, picture it in your mind. You've got some 2 million plus people standing on the shore, the other side of the shore of the Red Sea. They have been miraculously rescued from the Egyptian army.

Moments earlier, they were squaring off against the mightiest military in the ancient Near East at the time. Moments earlier, all they knew was certain death. Moments earlier, they were in great fear.

They were crying out to Moses and crying out to God, wondering why God even brought them here in the first place. Moments earlier, they were walking across dry land by faith, wondering if the walls were going to crash in upon them.

[13:21] But now, the waters have settled. The Egyptian armies are dead. The Lord's power has been revealed. And listen to me, faith family.

The freedom of 430 years of slavery that was positionally true the night of the Passover is now practically a reality on the other side of the sea.

And they cannot help but erupt in a song. A song of victory. And if you think it is compelling to hear a few thousand baseball fans sing Go Cubs Go after a victory, imagine over two million people singing praise to God because of His victorious salvation.

I bet you it could have been heard miles and miles away. The people of God singing the victory song.

Exodus 15 is the people of God singing the first written song of the Bible. And here's essentially what the song is. It's a song of praise to the God who saves.

[14:40] It's a song of praise to the God who saves. And what I want you to do with me in these next few moments is I don't want you to stand outside Wrigley Field and listen to a crowd sing Go Cubs Go.

I want you to stand just outside this shoreline and hear the people of God praise their deliverer.

Listen. Listen to the song and hear them sing. Verse 1. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord saying, I will sing to Yahweh for He has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and His rider has been thrown into the sea. Yahweh is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. This is my God. I will praise Him.

My Father's God. I will exalt Him. The first thing we see here is that this is a song of salvation. This is a song of salvation. In other words, you could say it's a song of a slaved people who have now become a saved people.

[15:56] Let me say that again. It is a song of a slaved people that have now become a saved people. You notice the emphasis here in these verses on salvation.

That God has triumphed gloriously. That Yahweh is my salvation. It's a song of rescue. It's a song of saving. And if you remember, these are the very words that Moses gave to Israel before this event even happened.

Before the parting of the sea ever took place. Go back to chapter 14 and look at verse 13. And notice what Moses says. He said to the people, fear not, stand firm and see, everybody say it, the salvation of the Lord.

In other words, Moses is saying then what now they're singing now. Namely, that this is an act of the God who saves. And of course, the entire Exodus story has been a story of salvation.

God has saved them from slavery. He has saved them from the death of the firstborn. He has saved them now from the Egyptian armies. And why is that? We talked about it last week as well.

[17:04] Because our God saves. It's just the kind of God he is. It is a part of his very nature, a part of his very character to rescue and save those that cannot save themselves.

It's who God is. And what I want you to do, because one of the things when I preach and teach is I don't want you just to know this exegetically. That's true. I don't want you to just know this intellectually.

Of course, I want you to learn, but I want you to feel the text emotionally. There's a feeling here in Exodus 15 that I want you to get into.

I want you to tap your heart into this emotion, this feeling of rescue, this feeling of salvation. And I'm going to do it this way. I want you to try to imagine a scenario.

Some of you have been in a scenario like this before where you are trapped. Maybe, for example, you're stuck in a very tight spot. Now, a picture like this immediately just makes me want to look away.

[18:05] I mean, imagine that you're walking through a cave and you're going through this small tunnel and you get stuck. You can't move forward. You can't move back. You can't stretch out your arms.

You are completely stuck there in total darkness. Some of you just even begin to panic. Or maybe imagine that you're walking at night all alone and you're lost.

You don't know where you are. You're in a very dangerous place. It feels like someone's chasing you. It feels like someone's after you. And you begin to feel that nervous feeling inside of what's going to happen to me.

How's this going to turn out? Maybe you just received a bad medical report. And you have that initial moment of, I'm scared. I'm afraid. Everything's unknown. I don't know how I'm going to get out of this.

Have you been in a situation where you felt trapped? Where you needed rescue? You felt feelings of being afraid or terrified or hopeless or nervous.

[19:00] Now, imagine. Are you still with me? Say yes. You still with me? Imagine the feeling. Tap into the feeling that you felt when rescue came. That is, you were stuck, but a rescue team came and got you out.

You were lost at night, but a friend came and picked you up. You received the bad medical report, but it wasn't long until everything was now fine. And you had that feeling of now it's over.

Now it's gone. I don't have to deal with that anymore. Now I'm free. There's that feeling of, I am no longer in the situation I was in.

I have been saved. That is how Israel feels in Exodus 15. Years of slavery, the fear of the Egyptians, the crossing through the sea, and now by God's grace, it's over.

We are saved. We are free. And notice it here, Faith Family, on the screen. Our joy in those moments is not just in getting out.

[20:06] It's in the one who got us out. What do you do to the doctor that performed the surgery? Or what do you do to the friend that picked you up? Or what do you do with the rescue team that got you out?

Thank you. Thank you. I would have not been able to get out of that if it weren't for you. This is not just a song about, yay, we're out.

It's a song of celebration to the God who got you out. The God who delivered you. Listen, it's like the story of Raju. Raju is this elephant from India.

And I was so struck by this story. Raju was beaten and abused for 50 years. In fact, the article said this, Raju spent the last 50 years living a painful existence.

In chains 24 hours a day. Chains around his leg had spikes which would cut into his flesh. Every time he moved, pus would ooze out of his wounds.

[21:15] Pain and brutality were all he knew. That was until a group called the Wildlife SOS. They orchestrated a midnight rescue mission for Raju.

This group of vets in the cover of darkness came in and they took the chains off, rescued this elephant, and took him 350 miles away.

But what struck me about the story was this. Is that when they took the chains off of him, he began to weep with tears.

They said, quote, The team was astounded to see tears roll down his face.

It was an incredible emotional moment for all of us. I love this. We could tell. Raju realized he was being set free.

[22:25] Until we stepped in, he'd never known what it was like to walk free from shackles. And faith family, here's Raju today.

That's a happy elephant right there. Now he knows what freedom is. Now he knows what it's like to suffer no more.

Oh my. Oh my. What a powerful illustration of our salvation. Amen. You and I were bound for hell. You and I were separated from God.

You and I were slaves to sin. You and I were held in chains of darkness. You and I were cut off from everlasting joy. But God sent in a rescue team.

His name is Jesus Christ. And he has saved you. Once you were a slave people, now you are a saved people. And that is the only reason you need to sing.

[23:24] This is a song of salvation of the God who saves. But continue to listen to the people sing. Listen to their song.

Pick it up in verse 3. 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 into 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. And you can keep reading on all the way down to verse 12. But what you see is this is not only a song of salvation, this is a song of strength.

[24:24] A song of strength. That is what Israel is singing here. It's not only were they a slaved people, and now they're a saved people, but they were a neglected people, and now they are a protected people.

They are a protected people. And not only does Moses give a sign of the salvation that was going to happen in chapter 14, but this is also another thing that Moses specifically said was going to be the case before the event ever happened.

Look again here at chapter 14, but verse 14. It says, Yahweh will fight for you. And that's exactly what the song describes.

It describes God fighting for his people. In fact, I told you a few weeks ago, if you remember when we looked at chapter 14, that this introduces a theme that becomes very popular throughout the Bible, namely that the Lord is a warrior.

If you've zoned out, I need you to zone back in. This is really, really important. Moses here and the people of Israel say that God is a man of war.

Our God is a warrior. He's a fighter. He fights for his people. Now, I want to unpack this a little bit more tonight briefly. First of all, I want to speak to the reality of it.

The reality that Yahweh is a warrior, that God is a man of war. There's no denying this biblically, for all throughout the pages of Scripture, we see the theme of God fighting for his people, fighting against his enemies, fighting against Israel's enemies.

There are numerous battles in the Old Testament that we could give reference to, where God goes before his people, and he fights on their behalf. Are you with me? The battle of Jericho in Joshua 6.

Gideon, when they overcome the Midianites, with 300 men up against 135,000 men. The Philistines, when the ark is returned.

David, when he goes up against Goliath, goes in the name of the Lord, and God fights for him. You come to the New Testament, and Jesus fights and stands against the Pharisees as they try to make others feel like rejects and outcasts.

[26:51] Jesus fights often in the Old Testament with the demonic spirits. He binds the strong man. And then look at Revelation 19. You see a vivid vision of this.

Revelation 19, 11. I saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it was called Faithful and True. And in righteousness he judges and, say it?

Makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems. And he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He's clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the Word of God.

The armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.

He will tread them like a winepress in the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. And on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

[28:02] Your God, the God of the Bible, is a man of war. He fights against his enemies. He fights against the enemies of his people.

In fact, Jesus is called a shepherd. And I hate how we have taken that title shepherd and we've made it weak. Like all he did was pet lambs all day.

A shepherd is a fighter because shepherds have to protect their flock from wolves. Shepherds know how to fight.

And Jesus is seen in the book of Revelation not just as the lamb that was slain, but as the lion of Judah.

And as C.S. Lewis said, he is not a tame lion. Our God is a God of war. He fights for his people.

[28:59] He is a warrior and that is a reality. But here's the second thing I want to say to it and that is the humility of it. Not just the reality of it biblically, there's no denying that, but the humility of it.

Do you know why the Lord fights for you, faith family? Because you can't fight on your own. Here's how Luther puts it in one of my favorite hymns, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.

He writes this, quote, Did we in our own strength confide? Our striving would be losing. We're not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.

Just ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it's he. Lord Sabaoth his name from age to age the same. And he must win the battle.

Amen? I mean, let's be honest. Let's be honest. This is a humbling thing to realize. You can't fight for you. And some of us don't like that. To be honest, we don't like, some of us are the type of people that I want to fight my own battles.

[30:02] I want to deal with this on my own. I'll be able to take care of that. But listen to me, faith family. When it comes to spiritual warfare, you are no match for the powers and principalities and demonic spirits in dark places.

You don't stand a chance against them. But you have a God that fights for you. Just like Israel was no match for the Egyptian armies as they stood there by the sea, you are no match for the spiritual forces.

You need a God to fight for you because you cannot fight for yourself. And that is a humbling thing. And yet it is true.

Most of us, the issue is simply pride. We're going to fight our own battles. Good luck with that. The word to Israel was, let God fight for you.

Humble yourself. Stand firm in your faith. And let God, a man of war, do the fighting. You with me? Here's the third thing.

[31:11] Not just the reality of it, not just the humility of it, but thirdly, the hostility towards it. This is a side of God's character not everybody wants to think about.

Think about it this way. If you're an Israelite, you love that God is a God of war. But what if you're an Egyptian? You see, there are many that don't like this side of God.

We don't like to think of God as a man of war who brings bloodshed, who destroys nations. Listen, who drowns people in the sea. We tend to want to think, no, the God I worship is just a God of love and he's gentle and he's kind and he's patient.

Well, then he's not the God revealed of the Bible. Because the God revealed in the Bible is not only those things, they are true, but he is also a God of war who wars and judges righteously.

I quote this all the time, but it's one of my favorite quotes from J. Vernon McGee. He writes, quote, this is God's universe. He does things his way. You may have a better way, but you don't have a universe.

[32:24] I love that. I've quoted it many times. You'll hear it again, I'm sure, in the future. This is God's universe. He does it his way. You may have a better way, but you don't have a universe. Here's my point. You don't get to determine who God is.

And it is the height of arrogance and stupidity to let your human limitations keep you from the fountain of true joy. I don't know how many people I know that will take this side of God and what they call intellect, which is in reality stupidity, keep them from coming to God.

That is the most arrogant thing I can imagine, is that you think you know better than God as how he should be.

The reality of it, the humility of it, there's hostility towards it, but then I'm going to end with this on this point, is the security of it. There ought to be a great security for us that know that those of us that have put our faith in the Lord, we have a warrior on our side.

You've been in situations where someone supported you and just having their support, knowing that they were with you, meant everything. Maybe some of you were bullied in school and you had a big brother that would back you up, right?

You were the little guy, but you're like, listen, if I call in my big brother, this is over. Or maybe you went through a time of difficulty and you had that amazing support of friends that just stood with you in that moment.

Or maybe you were facing a serious surgery and you had the best medical team on your side. And listen, knowing that you had the big brother, knowing that you had the professional medical team, knowing that you had those amazing friends, what?

Gave you the confidence to get through it. How much more, whatever it is that you're facing, you're standing on your Red Sea shoreline of life, afraid of something, to know that God is for you, that God is with you, and that he will fight for you.

What does Paul say in Romans 8? Can't preach this without quoting this verse, Romans 8, 31. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Is tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No. In all these things, what are we?

[34:59] More than conquerors. We're not just conquerors. We're more than conquerors. How? Through him who loved us. Oh my. There is great confidence and security in life, knowing our God is a man of war.

Some of you today are standing, I know because I know many of the stories in this room. You are here today, and you are standing on the shore of life, and you are scared to death. You've just received a diagnosis.

You're fighting a disease. You're going through divorce. You're facing some type of danger. You're fighting despair. And there are people, even within our faith family, facing death itself.

Listen to me. The only thing that gets you across the sea is knowing he's a man of war. And no matter what it is you're facing, he's with you, and he will fight for you.

Therefore, even in your suffering, guess what you can do? Sing. There's still a song to be sung, even in the fears of life.

[36:11] Well, let's listen in one final point here. Listen in to one more thing they sing about, and then we'll close. Verse 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.

The Lord will reign forever and ever. Finally, this is a song of security. It's a slaved people that are now a saved people. A neglected people that are now a protected people.

And a hopeless people that are now a heavenly people. A hopeless people that are now a heavenly people. Listen, these verses are lyrics about their glorious future in the dwelling place of God.

In fact, it actually takes us back, those of you that were in the spiritual realm class, when you see that, plant them on your own mountain, that's taking you back to Genesis, to Eden.

And Eden is not just a past reality, it's a future reality, as the prophets, as well as the rest of the New Testament, speak about a future dwelling with God on his mountain, where the people of God dwell in the presence of God, and you will finally enter into this promised land.

[37:32] Now, up until this point, Israel had lost hope. Most of them did not believe they had a future. How would you believe you have a future when you've just spent 400 plus years in slavery?

Now they're on the banks of the Red Sea. They've come through it, and what are they singing about? They're singing about a future they can now picture.

A day when they will be planted on the mountain of God, when they will be with God in his sanctuary, and he will reign forever and ever.

It's a foreshadowing of the promised land. Faith family, when you hear the lyrics of this song, particularly that about a future hope, about a glorious future where you dwell in the presence of God as he reigns forever.

When you hear these lyrics, you ought to say, wait, wait a minute. That's not Israel's song. That's my song.

[38 : 44] Those aren't lyrics just from Israel. Those are lyrics I'm going to sing. Because where do you hear of the song of Moses again?

Revelation 15. Look at it. Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, Exodus language, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire. And also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea with harps of God in their hands.

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb saying, great and amazing are your deeds.

Oh, Lord God, the Almighty, just and true are your ways. Oh, King of the nations, who will not fear? Oh, Lord, and glorify your name for you alone are holy.

[40:16] All nations will come and worship you for your righteous acts have been revealed. Look at me. I don't know what every detail of your life is, but you are not a hopeless people.

You're a heavenly people. You are a heavenly people and every single time we gather, you should be reminded of that because what we do on Saturday night and what we do on Sunday morning is dress rehearsal.

It is dress rehearsal for a coming day when there will be a great gathering. A multitude of people from every tribe and tongue will gather, not in Chicago to sing Go Cubs Go, but in a new creation to sing Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

And we will stand there on that shore knowing every fear we ever faced in this life has been conquered by our warrior king.

And we will know that we have forever crossed over from death to life. And on that day we will not be able to keep ourselves from singing.

[41:42] When we all get to heaven What a day of rejoicing that will be When we all see Jesus We will sing And shout Victory And I bet you you'll be able to hear us all sing for miles and miles.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this song. Thank you that while life is hard it is really really hard and there is much that we are afraid of in this life Jesus you have parted the waters you have done the ultimate act of rescue and redemption and we have crossed over by faith from death to life you have saved us you have fought for us and you have given us security in the promise of a glorious future and when we all get to that land what a day of rejoicing that will be when we all see

Jesus we're gonna sing and shout victory victory victory oh god let that victory be known now as we continue to endure this life a slaved people now saved neglected now protected hopeless with the promise now of heaven oh god help us now as we come to this time of remembrance and we remember the very rescue act that saved us the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as he took our sin and the walking out of that grave three days later guaranteeing us the ultimate victory in Jesus we come now to a time of remembrance celebration and joy as we give you thanks for what you've done in saving us it's in

Christ's name that I pray these things amen because Thank you.