The Song of Moses

Exodus 15:1-27

Key Verse 15:13 “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.”

Not many people acknowledge the relevance and power of singing hymns. Singing hymns draws God’s attention to our soul by our praising his name and work. It is not only our confession of faith but also the expression of our love, thanks, and devotion. So Paul said in Ephesians 5:19-20, “*speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*.” Dr. Charles Stanley said that when we praise God, something happens inside of our hearts. Praising God helps us to have the right attitude toward God. It also helps us to overcome temptations.

We sing songs and hymns to the Lord not only when we are successful and when everything goes well, but also when we fail in spiritual battles or everything seems to go against us. We experience the power of singing hymns when we are in danger and troubles. When Joshua and the Israelites marched around the wall of Jericho blowing trumpets, the wall collapsed. When David was chased by his enemies, he wrote many songs and psalms. When Paul and Silas were in prison in Ephesus, they praised the Lord by singing hymns. Then the door of the prison was opened for their freedom. We will experience the presence of the Lord and the power of God when we sing to the Lord and praise him by singing hymns and psalms. How often do you sing to the Lord and praise God in your daily life? How do you express your love and thanks to God and what do you do when you are in trouble? We need a habit of singing and praising much more than a habit of complaining and grumbling.

Today’s passage is Moses’ song, which was written by Moses at the Red Sea right after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. Moses praised the LORD with the people of Israel for what he had done for them. His song was divided into two parts according to the contents. First, what the LORD did for them in the past (1-12), next, what he is going to do in the future (13-18).

First, the LORD is a warrior (1-12). In his song Moses called God ‘LORD’ (Yahweh) ten times. This means that Moses rendered all the glory to the LORD in Exodus. Moses gave glory to God when he completed the Exodus with his people. In all aspects of our lives, rendering glory to God is essential and a good attitude as people of God. One fine young man was proud of himself after he had accomplished one project. So he bragged about himself before his godly wife saying, “Honey, finally I made it.” His wife prayerfully encouraged him saying, “You must say, I made it by the grace of God.” She asked her husband to remember God and render glory to God in all aspects of his life.

How did Moses describe the LORD in his song? He called God his strength, defense, and salvation in verse 2. Here the word, ‘defense’ is also interpreted as ‘song’ or ‘praise.’ Indeed, the LORD was the strength of Moses and his people when their hearts fell before the power of King Pharaoh. The LORD was their salvation, who delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh. Moses’ song reminds us of the song of Zechariah, who praised the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist sang a song in Luke 1:68-69, “*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeem them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David*.” Zechariah described Jesus as the horn of salvation who redeems his people from the hand of their enemies. Likewise, Moses praised the Lord who redeemed his people from the slavery of Egypt and rescued them from the hand of Pharaoh.

Moses described the LORD as a warrior. Let us read verse 3. “***The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.***” Who is a warrior? A warrior is a brave fighter who fights a good fight for his people, his nation, his family, and for himself. The LORD, the God Almighty, himself fought for his people, his kingdom, and for himself. In fact, there was nothing much for the Israelites to do for their Exodus. What they did was just to obey the LORD and to watch and wait. The LORD himself became a warrior and fought a good fight for them. How did he fight for them? Look at verses 1b, 4-6. “…***Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea…..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. Your right hand, LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shattered the enemy***.” When the Israelites left Egypt, King Pharaoh sent 600 of his best-armed chariots to chase them. When the Israelites saw the chariots, they were terrified. The Egyptians boasted of their weapons and chariots ready to destroy the Israelites. (9) But the LORD, with his mighty hand, threw the chariots into the Red Sea and covered them with water. In verses 10-12 Moses continued to praise the LORD who fought a good fight for his people, “***But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you---majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? “You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallowed your enemies.***”

Who is like you, LORD? If the LORD is with us, who can be against us? The LORD is a warrior. He himself will fight for us when we trust in him and rely on him. When David challenged Goliath, the giant, with a sling and several stones, people laughed at him. But David believed in God. He believed the battle belonged to the Lord. He trusted in God who would be with him and help him. David fought for the name of the LORD. The LORD stood by David’s side and knocked out the giant with one shot from David. We must participate in the battle with prayer. While the LORD fights for us, we must fight along with him through prayer. Moses raised his hands high while the LORD was fighting against the Egyptians. This was his act of prayer while the Israelites were passing under the water. We must raise our two hands every day for our spiritual battle. Do not cover your face with two hands in sorrow, but raise them high to the LORD for victory. Are you a worrier or warrior? We must be warriors like the LORD in our spiritual battle. Amen.

Second, on the mountain of your inheritance (13-18) In verses 13-18 Moses praised the LORD who would guide his redeemed people to the Promised Land. Look at verse 13. “***In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.***” After a mother delivers a baby, if she doesn’t care for him, she is not a good and responsible parent. After the LORD God delivered his people out of Egypt, if he didn’t protect them, he would not be a good God. The LORD who delivered his people out of Egypt would care for them and lead them to the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. Read verse 13 again. The word “in your unfailing love” implies God’s forgiving love and unceasing mercy on his people. In his unfailing love and mercy God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt. Now in his strength he will guide them to the Promised Land. Here, ‘your holy dwelling’ indicates the holy city Jerusalem. Moses repeated in verse 17. “***You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance---the place, LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established.***” The mountain of your inheritance points out the city on a hill, Jerusalem, where the sanctuary, the temple of God, would be built. The LORD God would dwell in this temple. Before the temple was built, the tabernacle, the tent of God’s dwelling place, would be built during their journey to the Promised Land. Moses sang this song at the Red Sea around BC 1,400. The temple was built on Jerusalem by King Solomon around BC 950. So God predicted what would happen to his people and in Jerusalem 450 years later through Moses. Do you remember that God predicted what would happen to Abraham’s descendants in Egypt 430 years in advance through Abraham? (Ge 15:13-16) In the same way God foretold the temple of God on the holy mountain of his inheritance 450 years in advance through Moses. Our God is an awesome God. Who among the gods is like you, LORD? You are all in control. You are the Sovereign LORD, who was, who is, and who is to come. (Rev 1:8)

When we mediate on this song of Moses, we come to realize that the journey of the Israelites to Jerusalem was like our journey to the Kingdom of God. As the Israelites marched to the Promised Land, so we are marching up to Zion, the beautiful City of God. As the Israelites passed under the water of the Red Sea by faith, so we pass under the water through baptism. Paul described this in 1Corinthians 10:1,2, “*For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*” As the Israelites became the people of God by faith, passing under the water, so we become the children of God by faith by being baptized into Christ Jesus. (Ro 6:3,4) God will continue to lead us and guide us into the Promised Land, the kingdom of God, as he did for the Israelites in the desert.

The journey to the Promised Land was not easy for the Israelites and not easy for us, either. The Israelites confronted many enemies to fight and obstacles to clear before they reached Jerusalem. The conquest war started. But they didn’t have to be afraid because God was with them. God was their warrior and fighter. God planted fear in the hearts of all the people of all the nations in the path of their journey. Look at verses 14-16. “***The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall on them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone---until your people pass by, LORD, until the people you brought pass by***.” In fact, as the book of Joshua 2 mentions, when the people of Jericho heard about the God of Israel, who dried up the water of the Red Sea and destroyed all his enemies, their hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed. (Jos 2:10,11) God gave fear and dread in the people of Canaan so that the Israelites could climb over the walls of Jericho, cross the river of Jordan, and conquer the Promised Land.

In our life of pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God, we also confront many enemies and obstacles like the Israelites did. We meet the people of Philistia, who are aggressive and hostile to the people of God. We meet the people of Edom, the descendants of Esau, who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. The people of Edom, who are materialistic and hedonistic, tempt us and mislead us toward the world of pleasure and the city of sin, not to the Promised Land. Who are the Moabites? Aren’t they descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham? The Moabites were descendants of Moab who was born from Lot and his daughter. Sexual immorality and mediocrity will challenge our journey every day. In John Bunyan’s book ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ a Christian is tempted and distracted by many things of this world while he is passing the town of Vanity. But he overcame temptations by holding the promise of God until he reached to the Holy City. Like the Israelites and like a Christian, we encounter many hardships and difficulties during our journey to heaven. Read verse 13 again. “*In your failing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling*.” I pray that we all may sing the song of Moses when we finish our journey and stand on the bank of the River of New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Heaven. Then we all sing together with the angels. Let us read verse 18. “***The LORD reigns for ever and ever***.” Amen. In the book of Revelation 5 when the Lamb took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb and sang a song, “*You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God*….” Then, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand angels encircled the throne and sang a song together, “*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise*!” (Rev 5:11,12) Finally, every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth sang a song, “*To him who sits on the throne….be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever*!” Amen. (Rev 5:13,14)

The LORD God desires to hear us sing songs, hymns, and psalms. I hope and pray that we all may join this heavenly choir in the kingdom of heaven. You don’t have to worry about your inability to read music notes. You don’t have to be anxious that you are out of tune. We’ll all sing together in harmony in unity. Kit wrote many songs and hymns. Ben wrote a poem for Rebekah, even before he met her. I don’t mean that we all should be singer songwriters, but that we all should make music to the Lord. Singing hymns opens the gates of heaven. Singing hymns and songs drives out all the elements of darkness from our hearts. Singing hymns will lead us to the Promised Land safe and sound. Sing to the Lord! Amen.