



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: FACING THE FUTURE
TITLE: FACING THE FUTURE WITH JOY
SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 15
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INTRODUCTION

We are in our third week of our “Facing the Future” series. Our new pastor Kyler Smith is directing our focus forward. As a church we want to face the future with seven key perspectives. In previous weeks, we talked about facing the future with *conviction* on God’s Word and *dependence* on God in prayer. It makes sense that we would start our series on those two topics. God’s Word and prayer are often seen as cornerstones of walking with God.

This week our focus is on facing the future with joy. We can have joy considering what God has done in the past. And considering God’s promises for the future we can have joyful optimism. In our text today, we are going to see how the Israelites responded with joy to how the Lord rescued them.

Exodus 15

15 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^[a] he has thrown into the sea.

²The 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.

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

⁴“Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

⁵The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.

⁶Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power,
your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.

⁷In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.

⁸At 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.

⁹The 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.’

¹⁰You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

¹²You 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.

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

¹⁵Now 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.
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.”

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.”

Bitter Water Made Sweet

²² Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. ^[b]²⁴ And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” ²⁵ And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, ^[c] and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the Lord ^[d] made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, ²⁶ saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer.”

²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

Explanation

Context

Moses and the Israelites are standing on the shore having witnessed God close the waters of the Red Sea. The Israelites had just walked across on dry ground. Pharaoh and his Egyptian army had been swallowed up.

The parting of the Red Sea marked the final miraculous rescue from the Egyptians. Prior, God had sent 10 plagues which led to their release from slavery. Now their salvation was complete. They were redeemed by God. They were free to follow God and to begin their journey to worship Him on His holy mountain.

Before they officially take off on their journey, they first sing a song of praise. They chose to face the future with joyful worship. Moses and the people sing to the LORD who saved them.

Song of Moses' Structure

In many songs, we can often identify a structure. Even those who are not so musically inclined can identify a verse, chorus, or bridge. A potential structure for this song is that verses 1-13 describes God's attributes and His actions toward saving the Israelites. Verses 14-16 describe how other nations are struck with fear. Verses 17-18 point forward to what God will do in the future.

Verses 1-13: God's Attributes and Actions

The song has a variety of descriptions of God. God is described as a victorious warrior. He has triumphed victoriously (v. 1), He threw the horse and rider into the sea (v. 1), and He is described as a "man of war" (v. 3). He shattered the enemy and overthrew adversaries (v. 6-7).

God is noted for His overwhelming and decisive defeat of the Egyptians. They were cast into the sea (v.4), the floods covered them (v.5), and they went down into the depths like a stone (v.5). God consumed them with fury (v.7). They sank like lead in the mighty waters (v.10). The earth swallowed them up (v.12).

As a result of God's actions, the Israelites can only conclude that God is their strength and song (v.2). He became their salvation (v.2). He is glorious in power (v. 6), majestic in holiness and awesome in glorious deeds (v. 11). Amazingly, God has shown them steadfast love and guided them in His strength (v. 13).

Verses 14-16: Other Nations are Struck with Fear

The news of what God did in rescuing the Israelites traveled. The Egyptians had become one of, if not the most, powerful nations in the world. God not only rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians, but the Israelites also were able to plunder them (Ex. 12:36).

It is interesting to recall as we look back at the account of Genesis, that the chief reason the Egyptian became so powerful was because of God's providence through the story of Joseph and a widespread famine. It is ironic to think that God elevated the Egyptians through a famine and would later destroy the Egyptians through 10 plagues.

It had become obvious to other nations that God had rescued the Israelites. The people themselves did not do it on their own strength. Appropriately so, these other nations responded with trembling (v. 14), pangs (v.14), dismay (v.15), terror (v. 16), and dread (v. 16).

The nations listed would end up being persistent foes for the Israelites. All the nations listed were on the others side of the Sinai Peninsula. Philistia was along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Moab was East of the Sea of Galilee and South of Moab was Edom. Canaan represented the entirety of that region.

This section concludes that these nations will want nothing to do with the Israelites. God had rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians and He would surely rescue them from these nations when the time came.

Verses 17-18: God's Future Plans for the Israelites

God plans to lead the people to Mt. Sinai—the place where they will experience His powerful presence. Once there, they will encounter the audible voice of God (Ex. 19:9) and see further demonstrations of His power in strong winds,

earthquakes, and lightning (Ex. 19:18–21). They will receive God’s laws and instructions on how to dwell with Him.

God did not free the Israelites to be a people for themselves. He freed them so that they could be a people for Himself. God wants to dwell with the Israelites, and He wants them to be a nation through which He will make Himself known.

Miriam’s Song

After Moses’ song, his sister, Miriam, leads the women. She is identified as being Aaron’s sister which is likely driven by a customary practice of introducing a person by the oldest brother.

With tambourine in her hand and with dancing, she leads the woman to sing. Her song repeats the first lyrics of Moses’ song: “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he had thrown in the sea.” It could be that she taught the women the entirety of the song, or perhaps she led them to sing just the initial lines.

Women singing a specific chorus after a war is not uncommon in the Bible. The woman often sang following David’s victories. The women would sing, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7).

A major point here is that we should recognize that *all* the Israelites learned this song, both men and women were joyfully singing about what the LORD had done.

From Joy to Grumbling

Unfortunately, the account in Exodus 15 takes a sad turn. Their joy rather quickly turned into grumbling.

The goal of the exodus was always to travel into the wilderness to worship God on His holy mountain. Having crossed the Red Sea, Moses “made” the people set out into the wilderness.

And as you might expect, the water available in the wilderness was sparse. We are told they traveled three days and found no water. And when they finally found water, it was bitter and presumably undrinkable.

Having forgotten that God was able to rescue them, they grumbled to Moses. As the biblical account unfolds, the Israelites will repeatedly be marked by a grumbling attitude. Looking ahead, they will grumble in Exodus 16:2-3 over their hunger. They would grumble again in Exodus 17:3 over another instance where they were thirsty. They would again grumble when they hear the report from the 12 spies that previewed the Promise Land (Number 14).

To be clear, grumbling is not when a person identifies a problem. Nor does grumbling occur when a problem is brought before a leader. The grumbling action here seems to be marked by several things:

- They seem to have forgotten about God's ability to rescue them.
- They seem to be filled with regret. They often express that they would have rather stayed in slavery than be in their current circumstance.
- To them, their challenges look bigger than possible solutions.
- They attempted to place the blame on someone else.
- Ultimately, grumbling is forgetting that God is in control. Grumbling to God can even occur over necessities like water and food.

And in this case, God viewed their grumbling as a test against Him.

Despite the grumbling, God acted mercifully to the Israelites. He instructed Moses to throw a log into the water and it became sweet. Yet, God's mercy at the same time came with a stern warning. God made a statute before the people that if they diligently listen to His voice and obey, then He will bless them. However, if they don't listen and obey, then He will strike them with the same diseases He placed upon the Egyptians.

Discussion Questions

- Do you think there is a correlation between joy and singing? If so, what?
- How many of you in the room consider yourself to be a musical person? Have any of you ever composed anything that would fit the genre of worship music or melodies?

- Does the idea of men and women singing *together* encourage you? What about when all the men sing separately from the women? What about when the women sing separately?
- Does anything stand out to you about the content of Moses' song?
- How would you define joy? And how would you define grumbling? Can joy and grumbling co-exist?
- What can we be joyful about concerning our church? Is there anything else currently going on in your life that you can say you are joyful about?
- How can joy enable one to better face the future?
- How does grumbling hinder forward progress?
- How can the grumbling of a group affect a leadership?

Conclusions or Application

THE "OTHER" SONG OF MOSES

It is worth noting that there are other songs in the Bible that are identified as Songs of Moses. Due to space, we don't intend to give explanations to each of the songs, but two of the references include Deuteronomy 32:1-43 and Psalm 90.

One song in particular, we want to highlight is found in Revelation 15:2-4 which reads,

²And 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 of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

*"Great and amazing are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations!^[a]*

*⁴Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.*

*All nations will come
and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

It is interesting to compare the Song of Moses in Revelation with the Song of Moses in Exodus. Notice these comparisons:

- Both come after God provides salvation. In Exodus, God defeats the Egyptians. In Revelation, God conquers the beast and its image.
- In Revelation, the song is not only identified as the song of Moses, but also as the song of the Lamb.
- In Exodus, God's defeat of the Egyptians strikes fear in other nations. In Revelation, other nations are invited to come and worship.
- In Exodus, it is promised that God will reign forever and ever. In Revelation, He is established as the King of the nations!

What do we make of these comparisons? And how might these comparisons help us think about facing the future with joy?

Without a doubt, God saving the Israelites from the Egyptians is amazing. God redeemed a people from slavery and made a people for Himself. The Egyptians had become perhaps the most powerful nation in the world, and God freed them through His miraculous hand. Yet, what is also clear in Scripture is that the Israelites, even after the exodus, needed a greater salvation. As difficult as it was to be enslaved to the Egyptians, we learn in the biblical story that the people were enslaved to an even greater enemy—their own sinful hearts. Those sinful hearts were exposed once they began to travel in the wilderness and lacked water and food. They turned from being a joyfully worshipful people to a grumbling people in a matter of three days.

We learn in the story that people are also in need of a greater leader. As great as a leader that Moses was, we need another leader who can save us from our sin. Moses was a man like us, a sinner himself. We need a leader who is sinless and who could ultimately pay the penalty of our sin. We need a leader who can serve as the Lamb of God. Of course, we need Jesus.

Amazingly, this kind of salvation is not only intended for the Israelites. This great salvation can be extended to people of all nations. And the salvation will not be one that frees us to travel to a Promise land where we must defeat additional nations in order to dwell with God's blessings. Instead, our salvation will be complete and one in which we will inherit a new heaven and a new earth. Then we will live in total peace.

The song of Moses and the song of the Lamb in Revelation marks a salvation where our joy is an everlasting joy. Our salvation is complete and our grumbling hearts have been made new.

In light of our coming salvation that Revelation speaks to, we live with joy in the present. Indeed, we can always be joyful in all circumstances. We serve a victorious God and the battle is always His. He is our King who will reign forever!