

October 15th, 2023

The Heart of Israel's Song by the Sea

Exodus 15:1-21

The Red Sea Gospel

If you are just joining us, last week we saw the greatest miracle in the OT—the parting of the Red Sea. The LORD cleaved the waters into two, piling them up as mighty walls so that Israel could walk through without even getting mud on their sandals. Then when Egypt pursued them, God collapsed the water on Pharaoh and his army and they utterly perished. It is a stunning picture of the gospel.

- Just as Israel passed through the Red Sea, so the Church has passed through the crimson blood of Christ and has emerged as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).
- Just as the waters were cleaved in two, so Christ was cleaved at the cross—His spirit was separated from His body—and we who have believed in Him have passed from death to life (John 5:24).
- Just as God cast Pharaoh and his army in the depths of the sea, so God “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).

Saved to sing!

Israel is finally free. Now what do they do? Only one response is possible: they sing to the LORD. Dear congregation, we were saved *to* sing. Singing is what Christians do. You might say, “I know lots of non-Christians who sing, the world is full of unbelievers who sing.” Ah, that is true. But what do they sing about? Children, boys and girls, do you know what the biggest difference between the songs of the world (Egypt) and the songs of the Church (Israel)?

What does the world sing about? They sing about themselves. Certainly, Pharaoh and Egypt sang to their ‘gods.’ But their gods were inventions of their own imagination or worse, demons. They sang about themselves. The world sings to itself. How sad.

A God-Centered Song

But the Church sings to the Living God. This song right here in Exodus 15 is the first song recorded in Scripture and it is utterly God-centered. A.W. Pink says here:

“...and what did they sing about? Their song was entirely about Jehovah. They not only sang unto the LORD, but they sang about Him! It was all concerning Himself, and nothing about themselves. The word “LORD” occurs no less than twelve times within eighteen verses! The pronouns “He,” “Him,” “Thy,” “Thou,” and “Thee” are found thirty-three times!!”¹

Why did they sing about God? Why do we sing about God? Because there is no one like Him!² That’s the center of this song! “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” We sing to God because there’s no one like Him! He is the

¹ Source: <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/Gleanings%20In%20Exodus%20-%20Arthur%20W.%20Pink.pdf> pg. 206 Accessed October 14, 2023

² To sing about man is to sing about the worms of the earth. Children, can you imagine singing to worms?

Oh, praise the mighty worm, beneath our feet,
The guardian of the soil, oh, such a feat.
They till the land, as they squirm and squiggle,
In their humble grace, they make the earth jiggle

incomparable God, the unconquerable God, the ineffable God. That's why we sing. Singing *alone* permits our souls to express affections to God that are too great for words. We sing to Him because His glory is like a burning fire shut up in our bones that we cannot hold it in—it must come out lest we suffer ourselves. We sing to Him because there is no one else worthy of song.

The Big Idea...

The Redeemed sing to the LORD for there is no one who can compare to Him in Heaven above or on the Earth beneath

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

The chiastic structure

Like any great song, this song is beautifully symmetrical in its form. It is in the form of a chiasm. A chiasm is “is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order.”³ So you have ideas A, B, C presented and then they repeat in reverse order C, B A. But what we often find in a chiastic structure is a central idea—found in the very middle—the

³ Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/chiasm-chiastic.html> Accessed October 14th, 2023

heart of message which everything else points to. Look at the insert in your bulletin, it shows the chiastic structure of this song.

- On the top in v.1 Moses sings and gives the reason why he's singing. On the bottom in v.20-21 Miriam sings and gives the same reason "the horse and his rider [God] has thrown into the sea."
- In the next idea down in v.2-3 Moses sings about "who this LORD is"—He is my strength and song and salvation, etc. This is mirrored in v.18-19—He is the LORD who reigns forever and ever.
- Next in v.4-5 Moses sings about 'what the LORD did'—He cast Pharaoh and His army into the sea. Moses is looking backward. This is mirrored in v.17 when he sings about 'what the LORD is going to do'—He is going to bring Israel to His mountain. Moses is looking forward.
- Next in v.6-8 Moses sings about how 'God's glory was seen' when Egypt was destroyed—His majesty, wrath and power. This is mirrored in v.14-16 when the nations see and hear of *this glory* and tremble in fear.
- Next in v.9-10 Moses sings about 'how God poured out His vengeance' on Egypt. This is mirrored in v.12-13 when he sings about 'how God poured out His mercy' on Israel.

The heart of the song⁴

⁴ v.11 is the heart of the chiastic structure both thematically and locationally—there are 10 verses before and after it.

All that brings us to the heart of the song in v.II. Every line in this song is pointing to this verse—supporting this verse. It’s the heart of the song. Moses sings “Who is like you, O LORD, among *the gods*?”

Who are these *gods*?

The Hebrew word for *gods* אֱלֹהִים ‘ēl sometimes means the kings and rulers of the earth.⁵ Certainly the mighty rulers of the past—Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Caesar terrified mankind. At their word, men could be thrown alive into the furnace or fed alive to lions. But what are earthly kings compared to the King of kings? Every king that ever lived eventually becomes food for the maggots. But our king, the King of King is from everlasting to everlasting. “Who is like you, O LORD, among *the [kings]?*” No one!⁶

Or the word אֱלֹהִים ‘ēl “gods” can mean the idols of the nations.⁷ Though idols are false gods, they are in fact demons⁸ or demonic spirits. Demons can terrorize mankind. One only needs to think of the man possessed by Legion in the gospels and how he lived naked in the graveyard, constantly cutting himself. Demons terrify mankind. But demons are absolutely terrified by the LORD. When Jesus Christ confronted Legion, they were so terrified of Him that they

⁵ Psalm 82:1

⁶ Or the word *gods* אֱלֹהִים ‘ēl can mean the angels in Heaven (cf. Psalm 89:6). When John saw an angel in Revelation 22:8, it was so magnificent that John fell down to worship it. But the angel said “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant...Worship God.” The angels—though god-like *to us*—are *nothing* compared to God. The greatest archangel has more likeness with an ant than with God. “Who is like you, O LORD, among *the [angels]?*” No one! Or the word אֱלֹהִים ‘ēl “gods” can mean the mighty things in nature (cf. Psalm 80:11). The Red Sea was a body of water that no man could cleave in half. The East wind is a force that no man can demand obedience from. But Yahweh wielded the east wind as a sword in His hand and cleaved the Red Sea in half. The mightiest forces of nature are servants of Yahweh. Man must yield to these forces. But these forces must yield to God.

⁷ Daniel 11:36

⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:19-20

asked to be sent to the pigs and then they rushed into the sea and were drown (Mark 5:10-13). “Who is like you, O LORD, among *the [demons]?*” No one!⁹

So which *meaning* does Moses mean here?¹⁰ I think both of them. Line up all the mighty ones on earth and in hell—whether they be thrones or dominions, whether they be demons or kings—and you will find there is no one is like the LORD our God.¹¹

God’s incomparable otherness

Moses continues the song halfway through v.11 “Who is like you¹², majestic in *holiness...*” What is God’s holiness (קִדְּשׁ qōḏeš)?¹³ It is His separateness, His set-apartness, His otherness. Calvin says here that “holiness expresses that glory which separates God from all His creatures.” For God to be holy means that He is without peer. It means the Heavens are impure in His sight (Job 15:15). It means He is incomparable—that there is nothing and none like Him.

⁹ Or the word אֱלֹהִים ‘ēl “gods” can mean the mighty things in nature (cf. Psalm 80:11). The Red Sea was a body of water that no man could cleave in half. The East wind is a force that no man can demand obedience from. But Yahweh wielded the east wind as a sword in His hand and cleaved the Red Sea in half. The mightiest forces of nature are servants of Yahweh. Man must yield to these forces. But these forces must yield to God.

¹⁰ Calvin says it probably refers to idols. John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. II*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 259

¹¹ As Puritan Stephen Charnock says here “No creature can share with Him in His praise.” Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God, Updated and Unabridged, Vol. 2*, Ed. Mark Jones, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2022), pg. 1045

¹² The question is asked not once but twice. The doubling of this question means it is a thing that is fixed and unmovable. (Genesis 41:32). It is the equivalent of a “verily, verily” or “truly, truly.” So ‘holy’ is God that it must be said twice: “There is no one like God, there is no one like God.”

¹³ Though the word certainly means moral purity with the negation of anything unclean or impure (Isaiah 6:1-7), it doesn’t seem like moral purity is what is in view here as much His utter one-of-a-kindness, or set-apartness from all other beings.

The modifier

Moses modifies it by saying that God is *majestic* in holiness. The Hebrew word for majestic is related to the idea of having a hernia on your belly.¹⁴ What happens when you get a hernia? Your insides force themselves outward. God's holiness is herniating in the cosmos. Nothing can hold it back. It's always forcing itself outward for all to see. It's always going public. It is greater, wider—more *majestic*—than all other things.¹⁵

God's terrible justice

How is God's holiness specifically *forcing itself outward*? In 1) His terrible justice and 2) His wonderful mercy. **First** we see *His terrible justice*. Halfway through v. 11 “Who is like you, majestic in holiness, *awesome in glorious deeds...*” Awesome (אָרֵר yārē') means *fearful, terrible, dreadful*. The punishments God poured out on Pharaoh and his army were *most fearful, most terrible, most dreadful*. God's holiness goes public *especially* when He brings the wickedness of the wicked back on their heads.

God's wonderful mercy

Second, God's holiness—His otherness—goes public in *His wonderful mercy*. End of v. 11 “Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, *doing wonders?*” Wonder (פֶּלֶא pele') here means wonderful, something distinguished, that which is admirable, a miracle of God. What is the greatest wonder, the most distinguished most admirable miracle of God in the universe? That a holy God would show mercy to sinners. The mercy God poured out on Israel was the most wonderful, most distinguished, most admirable miracle that

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h142/kjv/wlc/0-1/> Accessed October 14th, 2023

¹⁵ “God is to be magnified: We must make room for him.” John Trapp, see Charnock, pg. 1043, fn. 1

took place at the Red Sea. God's holiness—His otherness—goes public especially when He shows mercy to an undeserving people.

The heart of Israel's song at the sea

That's what this song at the sea is about: the *terrible revenging justice* and *wonderful tender mercy* of a holy God. And these things are the very fuel of singing.¹⁶

Our doctrine: the otherness of God in justice and mercy

That brings us to **our doctrine**: *the Redeemed sing to the LORD for there is no one who can compare to Him in Heaven above or on the Earth beneath.*¹⁷ Moses and all Israel burst forth in singing because they saw there is no one like the LORD. There is no one who is terrible in justice and wonderful in mercy like the LORD.¹⁸ Consider how God's justice and mercy is at the heart of Israel's song.

I. God's terrible justice in this song

Look at v. 3, Moses sings "The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name." Who does this holy God wage war against? Pharaoh and his army.

¹⁶ Puritan Stephen Charnock says here: "...the judgments of God upon his enemies as well as His mercies to His people are *the matter* [the very substance] of [our] praise." Charnock, pg. 1046

¹⁷ "The heart of the song by the sea declares: "Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, awesome in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). Yes, the exodus has revealed Yahweh. The people who would once have asked "What is the name of our fathers' God?" now declare His incompatibility, His transcendent holiness and uniqueness. They declare, to borrow Moses' previous words in Exodus 9:10, that "there is not one like Yahweh our God" and so have begun, within the context of grateful worship, to proclaim the glories of Yahweh's name throughout the earth. Pharaoh's previous mock, "Who is Yahweh" (Exodus 5:2) has now become an ascription of praise, "Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods?" (Exodus 15:11)" L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP Academic, 2020), pg. 42-43

¹⁸ Yes this song shows that Yahweh alone controls the destinies of nations—that He can tears one down and raises another up. Yes this song shows that Yahweh alone controls all the forces of the natural world—the wind, the seas, the mountains. But these wonders simply set the stage to reveal God's terrible justice and His wonderful mercy.

They have set themselves against God and His people (v.9) And so God goes to war against them. Consider how Moses sings of their terrible fate.

- End of v.4, they “*were sunk in the Red Sea.*”
- End of v.5 “*they went down into the depths like a stone.*”¹⁹
- End of v.10 “*they sank like lead in the mighty waters.*”
- End of v.12 “*the earth swallowed them.*”

It’s v.10 that especially gets me. “*They sank like lead in the mighty waters.*” This language is not accidental. When God hardened the hearts of the Egyptians, it was a judicial hardening. Their hearts became כָּבֵד *kāḇēd* in the Hebrew—meaning *heavy* (Exodus 7:14). They sank like lead because they had hearts weighed down with evil. John Currid writes that the “Egyptians believed that after death, a person would face judgment in the underworld. The heart of the deceased...would be weighed on the scales of truth. On one side of the scale was the heart and on the other was the feather of truth and righteousness. If the heart weighed heavy with misdeeds, the person was deemed unjust and unrighteous and would be banned [from] the Egyptian afterlife.”²⁰ This whole scene is of the Egyptians sinking like lead is pointing the to final day of judgement. The wicked will sink down to the very depths of hell forever and ever. A millstone of judgment will be tied around their heads and they will be cast into the deep darkness. The earth will swallow them. There will be no escape. But we saw this judgment last time why does Moses repeat it? Because now he and Israel are *singing* about it. They *praised* the God of Heaven, they

¹⁹ End of v.6 the “*LORD shatters the enemy.* Halfway through v.7 “*you overthrow your adversaries.*” End of v.7 “*it consumes them like stubble.*”

²⁰ *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, Ed. Miles V. Van Pelt, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2016), pg. 82

adored His name, they *exalted* His holiness because He is a God who judges evil fully and finally. Dear congregation, who else in Heaven and Earth can do that? We look at the world today and see evil men doing evil things at it looks like they are getting away with it. Who is going to set things right? No human court can. That's why Israel sang. That's why we sing. Because no one in Heaven and Earth can do what the LORD did and will do. Judgment belongs to Him. He will cast the wicked into hell on the Last Day. And all the Redeemed will praise His name for it, that evil has finally been vanquished.

2. God's wonderful mercy in this son

Far greater than His justice is God's wonderful tender mercy.²¹ God's acts of justice are called *opus alienum*, God's "strange work," (Isaiah 28:21). But God's mercy is what He most delights in. He says in Jeremiah 32:41 "I will rejoice in doing them good." He exalts Himself *most* in showing mercy (Isaiah 30:18).²² Look at what Moses sings.

²¹ God doesn't delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11).

²² "My brethren, though God is just, yet his mercy may be in some respect to be more natural to him than all acts of justice itself that God doth shew, I mean vindicative justice; in them there is a satisfaction to an attribute, in that he meets and is even with sinners; yet notwithstanding there is a kind of violence done to himself in it, the Scripture so expresseth it; there is something in it that is contrary to him. And so many interpret that place, "I will not the death of a sinner;" that is, I delight not simply in it, I will not do it *animi causa*, for pleasure's sake, because I delight in the thing (as those that are of the "Remonstrants" opinion slander the other party, that they make God to delight in the death of a sinner). No; when he exerciseth acts of justice, it is for a higher end, it is not simply for the thing itself; there is always something in his heart against it. But when he comes to shew mercy, to manifest that it is his nature and disposition, it is said that he doth it with his whole heart; there is nothing at all in him that is against it, the act itself pleaseth him for itself, there is no reluctancy in him. Therefore, in Lam. 3:33, when he speaks of punishing, he saith, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." But when he comes to speak of shewing mercy, he saith he doth do it "with his whole heart, and with his whole soul;" so the expression is, Jer. 32:41. And therefore acts of justice, you know, are called *opus alienum*, his "strange work," and his "strange act," in Isa. 28:21. But when he comes to shew mercy, he rejoices over them, to do them good, with his whole heart, and with his whole soul; as it is in that Jer. 32:41." Thomas Goodwin, excerpt taken from *The Riches of God's Love to His Elect*. Source: <https://www.puritanboard.com/threads/justice-a-strange-work.108083/> Accessed October 15, 2023

- v.13 “You have led [your people] in your *steadfast love*.” KJV says *mercy* here. The word in Hebrew is *hesed*—it’s the most special word for God’s never leaving, never forsaking covenant love. The special mercies He reserves only for His people.
- End of v.13, Israel is the people “whom you have *redeemed*.”
- End of v.16, Israel is the people “who you have *purchased*.”

Why did God need to show *hesed* to Israel? Why did they need to be redeemed by the Passover Lamb? Because they were every bit of guilty as Egypt (cf. Ezekiel 20). Our call to worship this morning has the Psalmist speaking of this event and He says “Both we and our fathers have sinned...they rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea” (Psalm 106:6-7). Right on the shores of this sea, Israel had rebelled against God even when He was in the act of saving them. Yet He showed them mercy. He held back the judgment they deserved. But again we saw this mercy last time why does Moses repeat here? Because now he and Israel are *singing* about it. They praised Jehovah for His tender mercies, they lifted their voices to Him for redeeming them, purchasing them. But there is more. They also sang to Him for His future promises. Look at v.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.” God was going to bring them to Himself, to His mountain—indicative of bring them back to paradise.²³ Israel was going to come to His sanctuary, His dwelling place. Man was going to be brought back to God! Dear congregation, who else in Heaven and Earth can do that? You and I, like Israel,

²³ In Exodus 19 Moses would lead Israel to Mt. Sinai to meet with God just as God met with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden which was a Mountain (Ezekiel 28:13-14), from which the rivers watered the earth (Genesis 2:10-14).

are every bit as guilty as those who sank in the sea. But God took that weight of our sin, that weight that so burdened our hearts, that infinite weight that would drag us down to hell and He nailed to His Son on the cross. We must sing to Him. Oh what tender mercy! Oh what unspeakable love! We will not sink like lead in the mighty waters. The earth will not swallow us up. Instead we will go to the Mountain of God—to the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, to Mt. Zion itself and you will dwell with God forever and ever, from age to age, world with out end. No one else could accomplish this but Jehovah God. That's why the Redeemed sing. That's **our doctrine**: *the Redeemed sing to the LORD for there is no one who can compare to Him in Heaven above or on the Earth beneath.*²⁴

II. Our Duty

Elenctic Use

Our **first duty** is to *answer an objection*. Many Christians struggle with singing. I see it even in our own congregation. Perhaps someone might say

²⁴ There is a second Exodus that has already begun and is still yet to be accomplished (Isaiah 11) and a second song by the sea still to be sung (Isaiah 12). cf. Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller Vol. 1.*, (Harrisonburg, VA.: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), pg. 602ff. Additionally there is a second song of Moses to be sung in Revelation 15:3-4. Which song is this, Exodus 15 or Deuteronomy 32? Perhaps both. 1) Moses and Israel sang the song in Exodus 15 in response to God's defeating Egypt on behalf of Israel. Apostate Jerusalem was the new Egypt in the 1st century (Revelation 11:8), therefore the Jewish Christians being saved out of the new Egypt may have taken up the song of Moses from Exodus 15 celebrating new Egypt's defeat echoing the first exodus (just as the plagues in Revelation echo the plagues in Exodus). 2) God instructed Moses to write the song in Deuteronomy 32 as "...a witness for me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant. And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring) - Deuteronomy 31:19-21. In the 1st century, the Jews broke the covenant like no other generation before them (Matthew 23:29-29). When Christ punished them in the book of Revelation (partial preterist perspective), the Jewish Christians took up this song from Deuteronomy 32 to "confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring)."

“Singing is an unnecessary exercise. It’s far more rational to simply speak of God’s worth in prose, not in poetry—to speak with reason rather than sing with music.” How do we answer that? **First** by saying that singing is not optional exercise in the Christian life, it is a command from God. Ephesians 5:19 tells us to sing and make melody to the Lord with your heart. It’s a command.²⁵ **Second**, singing does something to us. Jonathan Edwards says here: “...the duty of *singing* praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music, *but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our affections.*”²⁶ Or Brakel puts it more simply: “break open your mouth and your closed heart will open as well.”²⁷ God wants us to sing precisely because it is an exercise of the heart.

Informatory Use

That brings us to our **second duty**, *consider* what singing accomplishes. What does singing accomplish for us—for believers?

Singing gives us spiritual strength

v. 2 says “The LORD is *my strength* and my song.” When King Jehoshaphat came to the Prophet Elisha for help because his army had no water, Elisha called for a musician to play one of the songs of the LORD. 2 Kings 3:15 “‘But now bring me a musician.’ And when the musician played, *the hand of the LORD*

²⁵ It’s in our text as well. Halfway through v.1, Moses sings “*I will sing* to the LORD.” The Hebrew verb is a cohortative, meaning it is expressing a command. Moses—a prophet of God—is commanding himself and by extension all who are singing with him to sing to the LORD.

²⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 242

²⁷ Wilhelmus A Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service, Vol. 4: Ethics and Eschatology*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995), pg. 35

came upon him.” The song of God brought strength to the prophet so that he could answer Jehoshaphat. Loved ones, this is what singing does. Do you feel weak? Do you feel burdened? Do you feel like you can’t go on? Break open your mouth and sing to LORD and God almighty will come upon you.

Singing brings you in the presence of God

Halfway through v.2 we read “this is my God, *and I will praise him*”—the Hebrew can mean “I will make a dwelling place for Him.” That’s why the KJV says here “I will prepare for Him a habitation.” Where is God’s presence especially found? In the singing of His people. Psalm 22:3 “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”²⁸ Show me a person who sings to the Lord, and I’ll show you a person where the Spirit of the Living God abides. Do you want to experience the presence of God? Then sing to Him—your very singing invites His presence.

Singing helps you forget about yourself

Our besetting sin as believers is that we think about ourselves, dwell on ourselves, the internal tape is playing all the time: Me, me, me, I, I, I. But what happens when we stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon, or we stand on the beach on the Pacific Ocean? We forget ourselves and see God’s glory and are in that moment free of self. That’s what singing does, it focuses our hearts on the Lord. I mentioned earlier, this song mentions the LORD 12x and some form of His pronoun 33x. This Divine song invites us to be self-forgetful and to be in awe of Him. Singing sets the soul free of self and holds us captive to the glory of God.

²⁸ Also see 2 Chronicles 5:13-14

What does singing do for others?

Singing stirs up believers to serve the Lord

In v.20-21 of our passage we read “Then Miriam the prophetess...sang to them.” Fascinating that Miriam is called a prophetess here. It’s the only place. Why? Singing is a form of prophesying—of telling forth the Word of God. Her prophesying was her song, just like the sons of Asaph prophesied to the sound of lyres, harps and cymbals (1 Chronicles 25:1-3).²⁹ Their prophesying was done to music—it was singing.³⁰ When we sing, and especially when we sing the Psalms—we are singing forth the word of God—it’s a form of prophesying. Not foretelling the future, but telling forth the Word of God. What effect will that have on the hearts of fellow believers? What effect has such singing had on

²⁹ Saul was said to prophesy when he sang with the prophets (1 Samuel 10:5-6).

³⁰ “Concerning the Book of Psalms. That the penman of the Psalms did pretend to speak and write by the inspiration of the Spirit of God as much as the prophets when they wrote their prophecies, the following things do confirm: 1. Singing divine songs was of old one noted effect of the inspiration of the Spirit of God in the prophets, insomuch that such singing was called by the name of prophesying. 746 1 Sam. x. 5, 6. “Thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy, and the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them.” See also 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 2, 3. This seems to have been the most ancient way of prophesying. Inspired persons of old used to utter themselves in a parable, as sometimes it is called, or a kind of song. Thus it was that Miriam uttered herself when she did the part of a prophetess, Exod. xv. 20, 21. “And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and with dances, and Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” She, in the 12th chap. of Numb. ver. 2. boasts that God had spoken by her as well as by Moses. She seems to have reference to this time, for it does not appear that God ever had spoken by her at any other time, and it is probable that it was from her being inspired at that time, (or at least chiefly,) that she was called a prophetess. And this was the way that Moses delivered his chief and fullest prophecy concerning the future state of Israel, and the church of God, and the world of mankind, in that song in the 32nd of Deut.; the words were all indited by God, as appears by Deut. lxxi. 19, 20, 21. And Moses’s blessing of the children of Israel, and his prophecy of their future state, in Deut. iii. is delivered song-wise, which especially appears in the beginning and ending. And so are Balaam’s prophecies, or parables. Jacob’s blessing and prophecies concerning the future state of the posterity of his twelve sons, Gen. xlix. is delivered in a like style, as may be plain to any one that observes. Zechariah is said to prophesy in uttering a song, Luke i. 67.” Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 745-746

you? “Have you not been stirred up by hearing the singing of others?”³¹ When you ‘prophesy’ God’s word in song, you stir up the hearts of other believers to have dealings with God. That’s what Miriam was aiming at in the text. That’s what we should aim at in our singing.

Singing also convicts unbelievers of sin³²

In 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 says “*if all prophesy*, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted *by all*, he is called to account *by all*,²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.” Isn’t that interesting? Paul gives a scenario: ‘*If all the church is prophesying* and an unbeliever walks in.’ When does the whole church prophesy at the same time? When they sing! Singing is massively evangelistic. Unbelievers may never hear public singing, unless it’s at a baseball game or at a concert. But every week, the saints sing to the Triune God and the unbeliever’s heart is exposed to it. It is such an experience, that Paul says the unbeliever will declare that “God is really among you.” What a motive for singing loud and joyously—that the unbeliever can see that following Jesus Christ is not a grievous thing but a joyous thing—a happy thing.

Experimental Use

³¹ Brakel, pg. 36

³² We also see that singing does something to the enemies of God. Look what happened when King Jehoshaphat and his army began to sing (2 Chronicles 20:20-23). William Brakel wrote that “The [Catholic Church] in France [during the Reformation] knew this and therefore they strictly forbade the singing of psalms and meted out cruel punishment for this—even prior to massacring the church.” [Brakel, pg. 36] Jan Huss one of the predecessors of Luther “...was martyred for (among other things) speaking the “heresy of congregational singing.” [Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing!: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church*, (Nashville, TN.,: B & H Publishing Group, 2017), pg. xxiii] Singing is dangerous to the darkness because is a proclamation to the universe that Christ is supreme!

Our **third duty** is to *examine* ourselves. “If you have no desire to sing, then what will you do in church and in heaven?”³³ Beloved the new Heavens and the new Earth will be filled with songs to our Redeemer, to our Jesus. When you see Him face to face, and see the scars on His hand and His side, and you know that He did that for you, how will you respond? Will song not erupt from your lips? When you see that Your Savior really loved you and gave His life for you, how could you not sing? That’s just as true now. Jesus is in our midst now. “Where two or three are gathered in my name,” He says, “there I am among them.” (Matthew 18:20). Will we not all sing to Him now?

Admonitory Use

Our **last duty** is to *warn* those who have not yet believed the gospel. If that is you, please listen. Israel and Egypt are representative of all men: you are either singing to the Savior on the shore, or you are sinking like lead in the mighty waters. There is no singing in hell. There’s only weeping. There’s no music in hell, only the sound of gnashing teeth. There is only the terrible justice of God, there’s no mercy. You will sink forever and ever because of the guilt of your own heart. You will be swallowed up in misery and ruin, and you will never be able to escape. Here’s the gospel—the good news: You are a sinner. Jesus Christ is a Savior who forgives sinners. He died on the cross so that sinners could have all their sins punished in Him. He rose from the dead so that sinners could have a perfect righteousness in order to stand before a holy God. The Scripture says “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”³⁴ If you trust in Him, if you receive Him as Lord,

³³ Brakel, pg. 36

³⁴ 1 John 5:12

you will be saved and you will have something to sing about in this age and the age to come.

III. Our Delight

Saved to sing!

What is our delight this morning? To sing. v.1 “I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously.”

Q. Why should you sing?

Because God has put away your sin in Christ. The greatest plague of your life—your own sin—that sin that once enslaved you, that sin that once condemned you, that sin that was a lead weight that was dragging you down to the lake of fire has been put away through the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

Q. Why should you sing?

Because God is going to take you to Mt. Zion where you will live with Him forever and ever. Revelation 21:3-4 “Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.^[c] 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and

death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

My father’s god

Do you know who has the greatest impact on singing? Fathers. Moses mentions his father in this song. Look at v.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.” One author says here “Moses does not speak of the Lord as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but as “my father’s God.”³⁵ Moses is talking about Amram, his own father.³⁶ We don’t know much about him, but we know the most important thing. Amram and his wife were strong believers. Hebrews 11:23 tells us that by faith, Moses parents hid him from the edict of the king. And as Moses is singing this song, his father comes up. Why? Because he was now singing to the same God his father sang to. “...this is my God, and I will praise him, *my father’s God*, and I will exalt him.” Fathers what a great privilege you have—to sing with your kids. You get to teach them the greatest songs in the universe. You get to disciple your children not only to believe in the LORD with their mind, but to sing to Him with their heart. Sing with your children. Don’t just read the Bible to them in family worship, start singing with them. Show them how to celebrate this God. It is a true delight. Sing with them, that they also might stand on the shores of eternity and say “... this is my God, and I will praise him, *my father’s God*, and I will exalt him.”

³⁵ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch: Exodus*, (Vallecito, CA.: Ross House Books, 2004), pg. 198

³⁶ Exodus 6:20

