

## Celebration of Deliverance

I The Israelites rejoiced after their deliverance. (It is a normal thing to celebrate our triumphs. Very nearly everyone in the world celebrated the announcement that U.S. Navy Seals had killed Osama Bin Laden last week! Furthermore, we seem to celebrate even more ardently, if our triumph comes after a long time of bad news. For example, November 11 was celebrated in the U.S.A. for nearly 60 years, as Armistice Day after the First World War, and it is still commemorated as Veteran's Day, even though it is no longer a public holiday. Korea will no doubt celebrate on August 15<sup>th</sup> for a long time to come, too.)

A We, too, feel euphoria when God does something good for us. (We should; it is right to feel good at such times. Furthermore, we ought to remind ourselves frequently that God is our Heavenly Father Who loves us and cares for us. When we recognize the Hand of God at work in our lives it reinforces our faith in God's compassion and His mercy for His children. We may, at times, wonder why God *sends the rain on the unjust and the just alike*; but then, how would we feel about our Heavenly Father if we thought Him to be vindictive and spiteful, like we are? Would we not be tempted to think that when things go badly for us, that He had stopped loving us; that we must somehow earn His favor again (by our good works)— instead of simply confessing and repenting sins and receiving His forgiveness? Then the correct attitude on our part must be to receive both the good and the bad of life with equanimity, and to trust our Heavenly Father to work out all things for the best, for us *who love God and are called according to His purpose*. That kind of perspective makes the special blessings God sends even more special to us, because we know that all good things come from God, even if they come to bad people; and so we know that when something especially good comes to us, then we feel like a child receiving a special gift at his birthday party.)

B When confronted with new problems, we forget about the goodness of God too quickly. (We need not be *especially* humble, to receive both the good and bad of life with equanimity, for humble is a quality of character; either we are humble or we are not. We need not be *particularly* humble, but we must be humble. If we understand that the Hand of God delivers the blessings we receive, then we should also thank Him for being so gracious to us. It would be arrogant indeed if we both expected God to make our lives happy and easy all the time, *and* then neglected to thank Him when He does so. This is pride, not humility; and it is the one certain way to meet the wrath of God instead of finding His Grace; for *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*. So let us feel good and be thankful when good things come into our lives, but we must not be selfish or boastful about it.)

II There are three themes in the song in Chapter 15. (We ought also to note that Moses and Miriam led this celebration. Moses was God's prophet and Miriam was a prophetess. That means, when they spoke, they spoke God's words; and when they acted they performed the Will of God. We note their leadership in this celebration in order to explain the absence of humanism in the three themes of this "song"—which also may properly be called a "psalm". In fact, this "Psalm of Moses" is included in the Book of Psalms, in Chapter 90. And let us point out one more thing here: there is a clear distinction in Christianity between theistic and humanistic philosophy. The focus of church worship shifted away from God and toward humanity in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when scientific inquiry and free thought initiated the Age of Enlightenment. And the Age of Enlightenment had nothing to do with the Light of the Word of God; in fact, philosophy reached a nadir in the writings of Voltaire and the *so-called scientific inquiry* of Darwin. Yet, thanks in large part to the Protestant Reformation and the mass-production of the Bible,

churches kept Jesus in their liturgies until the 1950s and 1960s. By this I mean to say that as an institution, the church continued to focus on Jesus and humanity's need of redemption until very recently. Then, after the psychology of relativistic morality replaced the Commands of God in our social policies, churches began to exclude God (and to re-interpret doctrines like grace and redemption, justification and sanctification) in humanistic terms. God, Whom we used to worship in spirit and in truth, has become a vague, *somewhere-out-there*-goodness which we now must do our best to reach; and the sermons and songs of the institutional church now describe this complete disconnect between us and our Heavenly Father as if our efforts to reach God were the whole point of the Christian religion. Now, perhaps, we can understand why the contemporary church has so little use for hymns that allude to scripture, or for the scriptures themselves, or even for Jesus Himself. Does this not explain replacing a Cross with a Christmas tree, replacing an altar with a drum set, and substituting seminary credentials for platform standards? May God deliver us from the hypocrisy of such idolatry!

A First, they recounted what God had done. (He threw the horse and rider into the sea; He has hurled Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea; His right hand shattered the enemy; He blew with His breath and covered the enemy with the sea; and let us note too, that the pronouns in Chapter 15 are second person. That is to say, they were singing this song *to the Lord*, not to one another, and it was *about God Himself*, not about them or the problems of their lives. This is one example of how humanism has corrupted our music. Our best hymns used to speak of God in the third person; very few of them mention God or Jesus in the second person. Contemporary music has become even more apostate; now our subjects are we, us, (or most selfish of all—I) and references to our Lord and Savior are almost entirely ethereal— which is to say, implied, and not affirmed.)

B The second theme addresses the character of God. (We used to sing hymns that spoke of the holiness, or justice, or providence of God. Churches generally don't anymore. Please search carefully through the lyrics of your favorite ccm singers and discover just how much their mindless choruses have to say about the character of God. The absence of separation from worldliness in their lifestyles and the degree to which their publicity managers depend on "image" (rather than quality of talent) to promote their popularity speaks volumes in contradiction of any spirituality they pretend, in order to be accepted by the big churches they depend on to sell concert tickets. Moses, on the other hand, sang about how highly his father's God was exalted above all other gods. To say, *the Lord is a warrior, the Lord is His name* means that the name of the warrior Who fought and won the battle is the Lord. Who fights and wins your battles? You might not know His name, if you never sing the second verse of hymn # 37. Moses sang to God, "Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power"—and again we note, the pronoun is second person, not third. Moses is singing to God, not to Israel, and he shows God that he knows the Truth about God. **Let us read 15:7 together.** In verse 11 there are three references to the character of God: majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, and working wonders. The love of God is unfailing, and He has strength to guide the people He redeemed to His holy dwelling. If I were a heathen instead of a Christian, I would want to be on the good side of this God. I thank Him from the depths of my soul that I am adopted as one of His own.)

C The third theme is an expression of faith about the future. (Relativistic morality has damaged our faith immeasurably; and one of the worst kinds of damage is to the academic discipline of philology. In other words, what exactly do we mean, by saying words like *faith* and *profession* and *affirmation*? The humanism that is intrinsic to our educational institutions has taught us to put

these words together, and say *affirmation of faith*, and *profession of faith* and *affirmative profession of faith* when what we really mean to express is self-confidence, e.g., our confidence in our own ability to make the future better than the present. Then the relativism of our morality (again, an intrinsic quality of our educational institutions) demands that we *not* challenge the social scientists who misuse language so badly, even when they use it to undermine our faith in God. They would have us accept their prognostications and pontifications as if they were some new revelation of truth, because philosophy, after all, is pursuit of truth. Now true believers in Jesus are *especially* forbidden (by the liberals) to challenge pseudo-science because we already believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. That makes the real, true, sincere faith of believers into an insurmountable obstacle for academia. Therefore we are forbidden (by them!) to challenge their foolishness, even though they will never extend the same courtesy and consideration (of relativistic acceptability) to us who believe.

Well you already know what I think of academia; so let's get back to the real meanings of affirmations, and positive professions, and faith. Faith begins, and ends, at the Throne of God Almighty. Our faith is a gift from God, and the object of our faith is reconciliation with God by means of His Grace. To speak thus is a positive profession of what we believe to be true. Affirmation means validation by agreement. That is to say, one of us makes a positive statement and another agrees that it is true, and so we affirm the statement. These definitions relate to truth, and to our agreement or disagreement with truth; *The Power of Positive Thinking* or the *principle of positive profession* are not related to this at all. In both of these, the human mind conjures some alternative to present reality and then engages to power of the human will to bring the alternative into fruition. This is sorcery, not Christianity. But now we need to contrast this with Christ's

statement that “*As your faith is, so be it unto you*” (Matthew 9:29), and *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he* (Proverbs 23:7). The contexts of these statements give us the ammunition we need to refute liberal interpretations of these verses. In Matthew 9, Jesus was talking to a blind man who had faith for healing, He was not speaking to a general audience about their wishful thinking. The reference in Proverbs is a warning to a good man not to try to be friends with an evil man; to use this verse to say that a man will become whatever he focuses his thoughts upon is absurd.

So when Moses says *the nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia*, and what will happen to the chiefs of Edom, the leaders of Moab, and the people of Canaan, he is prophesying *truth* which will result from the character and the actions of God; he is not making some empty boast about what Israel will do in those places. When He tells God *You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance ...* he is *affirming* prophecies of God to the Patriarchs, not telling God what He must do for Israel. And when Moses says, *The Lord will reign for ever and ever* he is professing his faith in the eternity of the Kingdom of God. This is not just an empty idiom for Moses, it is revealed truth about the sovereign deity of God. Which of our songs have such themes?)

III Like the Israelites, we have been delivered. Our deliverance was from sin.

(Now there are people going around churches saying that they have a ministry of deliverance; and that if someone needs to be delivered from a bad habit (alcohol, drugs, or tobacco, for example) then they have a gift from God. They can pray for you and lay hands on you, and you will be delivered. They are liars. Such a *non-ministry* is not in the Bible at all. People who have such bad habits need to repent sin, and ask God to forgive them for their sin, and then whatever it is that they think they need to be delivered from will not be a problem anymore. Isaiah 53:5

tells us *he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* If we just stick to the Word of God in the Bible, we will see that we are already delivered from whatever sin it is that the devil keeps us in bondage with; and we were already delivered from whatever demon that snake-oil peddler convinced you caused your problem too... and he didn't have anything to do with it. Let us give thanks to Jesus then, *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed* (I Peter 2:24). We will see pretty quickly then, the problem is that the one who commits sin is not yet dead to sin. He is not yet living unto righteousness. Now Moses sang this song for Israel *after* their deliverance was done; and we should note that our deliverance is already done, too. The problem for the contemporary Christian and the snake-oil peddler is that they have not yet appropriated for themselves the deliverance Christ has won for us all; they have not yet participated in the victory of Christ over sin, because they have not yet repented sin or been born again, raised to new life in Jesus. That is where we need to be. That is where the real, capital-C Church, lives.

A Ephesians 5:19 tells us what kind of songs we should sing. (Let's read this verse together. Now we can see that the Bible imposes no restrictions on the kind of instruments we use; there is no comment about the meter or the syncopation of the music. The requirement is that we use *Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*. So let us sing some Psalms; there are 150 of them to choose from! Hymns are poems of praise for God set to melodies. And let's not confuse *spiritual songs* with the particular genre of music commonly known as *Negro Spirituals*; they are not the same. *Spiritual songs* means that the Spirit of God composes the melodies and the lyrics we sing. Now if the Holy Spirit is in fact the composer of the songs we use,

then they are good; but you cannot write down some warm-and-fluffy feel-good lyrics that contradict the glory and majesty of God by giving some drum player or guitar player license to give everyone else a headache, and then say that the Holy Spirit inspired it. You might fool the charismatics, or even the production staff at Word Music Publishers, but you cannot fool the Spirit of God, or God's servants.)

B Philippians 1:27 describes proper conversation. (All of you Koreans no doubt know what conversation classes are; some of you even attend them. So, what do you hope to learn to do, in conversation class? What do we accomplish by the activity we call "conversation"? It is talking, is it not? –and what do we talk *about*? Most people talk about themselves a lot. It seems like we want all our friends to know what we think about everything. Even if we ask them for their opinion, it is more an attempt to determine whether they agree with ours than it is to inform ourselves. Now we all know what conversation is in practice; but we would be remiss if we did not expand our connotations to include the influence of context on our choice of topics and on the words we use to discuss them. Can we not see then, that our conversations result from experiences in a larger cultural context? Then it will not really matter if our words are spoken or written, or only thought, cultural context frames them all. This is the correct understanding of *whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ*. Conversation is about all our interpersonal interactions, in whatever social context we find ourselves. We must use our speech, and indeed every interpersonal interaction, for the glory of God!)

C The Bible makes no allowance for our humanistic propensities. (Propensity means, first thought; or the general direction in which our thoughts tend to go. In Genesis 6:5, God described our humanistic propensities for Noah: He said, *every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time*. We are born in

sin. Sinfulness is part of the character of humanity. Then we compound our sin by attempting to justify it, or by excusing it; and we compound our error further when we persuade ourselves of our *self-righteousness* (which is our vanity) and then pray as if God should agree with us and reinforce our pride. There are even people who bring all this spiritual morass with them to church and hope to find the Grace of God without ever leaving any of it behind, and churches that are so desperate to fill up empty pews with warm bodies that they tell these impenitent sinners that *God loves you in spite of your sin, so just keep on coming to church and you will find the spiritual peace for which you seek*. These are they to whom Paul referred (II Timothy 4:3)-- *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine*. Guess what? People who cannot endure sound doctrine cannot sing Psalms or Hymns or spiritual songs, either; their conversations are corrupted by their worldliness and they corrupt the church by becoming the ministers—who teach people to pray in tongues, or to dance in the spirit, or to sing pop music in English so they can call their rock-and-roll music party an English ministry; or give you some prophecy in tongues and then interpret it for you, telling you to do whatever it was that you wanted to do and God will bless your mischief, or substitute some other humanistic methodology for scriptural doctrine. Do you see any humanism in Exodus 15? No, there isn't any. Let us copy a page from Moses' notebook here. We must glorify God; anything less is unworthy of Him.)

IV People have a tendency to forget about God when they have a problem. (We have shown how we, believers, ought to celebrate the deliverance from sin that God has provided for us; and how the contemporary church has moved so far away from the Spirit of God that what we call a church service rarely includes anything similar to this kind of celebration any more. We saw that Moses and Miriam were the leaders of that celebration; and we saw how contemporary

leaders do not—indeed, probably cannot—lead that kind of celebration in our churches. Now let us examine this thought from another point of view. We are mostly not as spiritual as Moses and Miriam were; we are a lot more like the Israelites who simply followed their lead. Now we shall see just how much more we have in common with the ordinary people than with Moses and Miriam.)

A For the Israelites, the problem was water. (It was a pressing problem; and the further they went into the desert, the more urgent it became. They knew that God could make miracles and that Moses was God's prophet; so why didn't God tell Moses to take them to some water? What would we have said and done? (*Doesn't that fool know that we don't speak English? Why doesn't he use shorter sentences and easier words?*) –and don't tell me you have never thought like that. (Or how about, *I can read the Book of Proverbs and I know kids ought to behave better, but he is a foreigner and not even a parent, so how can he tell us what to do with our kids?*) As you know, your Pastor takes pedagogy very seriously; too much so for some people! (Then there's always *he shouldn't be imposing his musical tastes on us! Our music is as good as that of anyone else.*) Well, I said enough about that already. The point is, you probably already know why the Israelites grumbled against Moses, but you might not realize that the same spirit that animated them animates us all. We all have a propensity for sin, even after we are born again; and some of us are not as good at subjecting our human pride to the Spirit of God as we ought to be. So we rebel, at least in our thoughts.)

B Food, clothing, and shelter are practical problems for us all. (We began this message with the observation that gratitude to God is proper, and expressing it is natural, especially when He surprises us with good things. So, what if it is not God, but Satan who surprises us, and the surprise is deprivation and frustration, instead of the blessing of material abundance? Now we should get something

straight before we go any further. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above* (James 1:17); and *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man* (James 1:13). So we may say that when good things come they come from God; when bad things come they come from the Devil. But can we not expect our Heavenly Father to intervene, to shield us from some of the bad things; and is the presence or absence of His shield not somehow related to cause-and-effect or to behavior modification by reward-and-punishment? Passages of scripture, i.e. in the Book of Job, make us want to ask such questions. Yet the basic premise, that good comes from God and bad comes from the devil, holds true even in the Book of Job. So where does that leave us, New Testament believers who have to find food, shelter, and clothing, and occasional medical care too, for ourselves and our families?

It leaves us precisely where Cain was at the beginning of Genesis 4. God counseled him, *Sin lieth at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it*. For us, the sin that lieth at our door is pride. Deprivation is not a sin, it is only an inconvenience. And pride is very insidious. It always points out the advantages of having more or better things than we have, and it never misses an opportunity to engender jealousy either, by directing our attention to someone who has more or better things than we have. As Cain needed to master his sin, so must we. We all know that he failed; but how can we avoid failing? We avoid the failure by following God's advice to Cain: we must master our sin. How do we do that? We do it by learning to be humble; and we learn humility from Christ.)

C Our New Testament perspective is Matt. 6:25-34 and I Tim. 6:3-11. (We should take time to read these passages together too.

Did you see, in Exodus 15, how many people died of thirst while they were waiting for Moses to sweeten the water? None of them did. They had liberty, and

they had life. So why did they grumble? They grumbled for the same reasons we grumble. We are not content with food and raiment, we want to have so much of it that we could not possibly ever run out. And do we suppose that we would be content, if we had so much money that we would never need to worry about how to pay for anything again? Some, perhaps, could find contentment in abundance, as Job apparently did; but most people would not be content as long as there was any other person who had any more or any better prosperity. There is a unique irony here: the person who would be content with much is also content with little. He is humble enough to accept what God gives Him and to be thankful for it. It does not matter to a humble man if he is a pauper. Now can we see the role of deprivation in the Will of God? It is His test of our character. God knows that we will do the same things with a lot that we do with a little. He is concerned for our spiritual strength, not for our material prosperity. The relative importance of these things in our minds is God's measure of our spiritual growth. He knew that the Israelites needed water; He also knew that He could provide it. So, where were their hearts? Where are our hearts? God will test our hearts to find out what, and whom, we love the most. Let us pray that we pass that test; God can take care of our material necessities. He has *already* passed that test, many times over.)

V Most people are not humble enough to trust God completely. (We aren't, but we should be. We will never get very far with God until we are. We can trust Him, for our deliverance from sin, for the eternal destiny of our souls, and for the material necessities of life while we are yet in this world. We say again, God is trustworthy; He has proven Himself to be trustworthy many times over. We can see that Moses sang to God about what God had done. We don't sing about that. We are not content. We are too proud, too greedy, too selfish, and too stubborn to change. We should stop asking how God can send the rain on the just and the

unjust alike and thank Him that He does; He could just as easily give us what we deserve to receive, instead of blessing us with the bounty of His goodness.)

A The Israelites saw God's miracles and then doubted Him anyway. (This was their humanism rising up in them. It expressed itself in their grumbling. How do we express our humanism? Far too many people tell God what they want Him to do for them; we sing about what we are doing for Him; and we complain when we are unhappy or uncomfortable, just as the Israelites did. In the end, the result is the same for us as for them. Instead of thanking God for the abundance of His blessings we complain about our inconveniences and discomforts. We complain so much that we begin to lose sight of the blessings themselves, and start taking them for granted. May God give us the grace to be humble in front of Him.)

B We, true believers with sincere faith in God, must be careful not to err from that faith because of our pragmatic problems. (God knew that the Children of Israel needed water, and He knows our needs too. So let us be humble enough to trust God for everything that we need. Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, a job, health care costs, and even grandma's retirement pension are easy for God, if we can only learn to do things His way. Jesus said to Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Then we need to learn to respond as Paul did: *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me* (II Corinthians 12:9). Then let us celebrate the perfection of His strength in our weakness, and then we can expect to see the power of Christ come to rest upon us.