



EXODUS

W H A T W E M E A N
W H E N W E S A Y G O D

PART NINE

The Song of Freedom





EXODUS

WHAT WE MEAN
WHEN WE SAY GOD

By Pastor David Fields

The Song of Freedom

I. We Sing for Joy

C.S. Lewis was agitated by the idea that God wanted us to constantly “praise him.” Like, “what kind of “God” incessantly demands to be paid unending complements? Like, is God that insecure...that needy?” It would be fair to wonder about the whole business of praising God.

“But the most obvious fact about praise — whether of God or anything — strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour. I had never noticed that *all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise...*”

“The world rings with praise — lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game — praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. . . Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible.” - C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

II. We Sing in Response to God’s Grace

“*Then* Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord...” – Exodus 15:1

When?

“**That day** the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And **when** the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.” – Exodus 14:30a; 31.

III. We Sing a Personal Declaration

“The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.” – Exodus 15:2.

Notice how it is personalized. “The Lord is *my strength...my defense...my salvation...*” And you and I can personalize this same declaration. We declare it to ourselves, to my family, and when necessary, even to the forces of evil and darkness.

IV. We Sing as *an Exercise in Hope*

“These daring doxologies sing what Israel has seen and heard about the decisive power and reliable commitment of Yahweh to intrude in life-giving ways in circumstances of defeat, disorder, and death.” – Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home*

Choosing to praise God, through songs, through prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude, even in the middle of the painful, it’s like wearing a jacket in the cold of winter. Choosing to worship doesn’t change the fact that it’s cold outside, but it ‘covers us’ in the middle of the cold. We welcome his presence, his comfort, and it changes our experience of the cold.

So, we sing our praise as an exercise of hope. For hope is not just ‘optimism’ – it’s betting on the fact that God acted in the past, and he will act for our good in the future. Some of us need to sing *through it today*.



V. We Sing to *Dethrone the False gods*

“It happens often among us that the praise is either escapist fantasy, or it is a bland affirmation of the status quo. In fact, doxology [the praise of God] is a daring political, polemical act that serves to dismiss certain loyalties and to embrace and legitimate other loyalties and other shapes of realities.” – Walter Brueggemann

“Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like you – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?” – Exodus 15:11

Who indeed! That really is the question. And so, the whole song ends on that same note with the final declaration: “The Lord reigns for ever and ever.” – Ex 15:18

Who is it in protest against?

1. Against *Me*. “Your kingdom come...” Not mine. “Your will be done...” Not mine.
2. Against the ‘false gods,’ or ‘idols’ of our age.

“An idol is a god-substitute. Any person or thing that occupies the place which God should occupy is an idol.” He goes on to give some examples:

Greed is idolatry. Ideologies can be idolatries. [like, for example, progressivism, nationalism, Marxism, capitalism, or libertarianism]. So can fame, wealth and power, sex, food, alcohol and any other drugs, parents, spouse, children and friends, work, recreation, television, and possessions, even church, religion, and Christian service.” – John Stott, *Acts*

3. Against the dark powers of evil (see Eph 6:10-20).

Do you know why it's sometimes hard to gather at church? Know why it can be a challenge to lift our voices, or lift our hands in praise? Because there are still dark forces at work in the world, and we are entering into spiritual battle when we do so. When we declare that "Jesus is Lord", we are not just saying it to ourselves, or to each other, or even to the watching world, we are saying it to the powers of darkness. Praising God is an act of defiance against every claim to authority in the world – including the powers of evil.

VI. We Sing This Song Forever

"They held harps given them by God and **sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb:** "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations." – Revelation 15:2b-3

"Why sing a new song using the words of Scripture? Because they want to sing to God accurately, rightfully, and in a manner consistent with who God really is...."

The Lamb's people do not sing to God out of their own imagining of who God is; they sing to God out of God's self-revelation. Their song, therefore, is radically God-oriented. It is not about them. It is about their God who won the victory through the Lamb."

– Darrell Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*

The great irony: the great and powerful God we sing of in Moses' song, this God conquers, wins the ultimate battle by becoming...weak. This God allows his body to be given over to death, for us. The mighty God becomes weak to bear our weakness. The mighty God is raised again in victory, but only on the other side of the grave.

What do we do with that?

We sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. And then let the Lamb lead us.

"In your unfailing love **you will lead** the people you have redeemed. In your strength **you will guide** them to your holy dwelling." – Exodus 15:13

So maybe ask yourself: What songs am I singing about God?





discussion

Open Up

Some people love singing songs of praise. Others... not as much. Where do you fit – love singing in church, or not so much? Why?

Dig In

1. **Read Exodus 15:1–12.** Focus on v.2 for a moment. In the message we saw how we can make these same kinds of personal declarations – sometimes to ourselves, to our friends and family, sometimes even to the powers of evil themselves. Have you had any experience with praying/saying these sorts of things? How did it impact your experience?

2. As Christians, looking back to this text in light of Jesus' finished work on the cross, we too can see how God has fought for us, but has achieved a victory that goes far beyond even what the Israelites experienced in the Exodus. Even still, the God who is revealed in Jesus is one and the same as Israel's God Yahweh. How can this section of text help form your vision of God? How might the work of Jesus further sharpen our understanding of God?

3. **Read Ex 15:13–18.** The song of Exodus 15 divides into two major sections: vv.1–12 reflect on what Yahweh did in saving them from the Egyptian army, and vv. 13–18 looks ahead with confidence about how God will lead in the future. This feature is an intentional part of the structure of the song.

- a. Why do you think it matters to both “look back” and “look ahead”?
- b. As you look back on your life to this point, what are one or two specific moments where you saw God do something that led you to joy?
- c. How might you use these moments of deliverance or God's presence to fuel your response of praise?
- d. How might looking back help you to have confidence for the future?

Prayer

In your prayer time, take time to give thanks to God for his ultimate victory through Jesus. Give thanks for those places where you have seen him work on your behalf. Pray for the needs of your group and find confidence in the reality that the Lord will continue to “lead the people” he has redeemed with unfailing love.