

# Celebrating Our Salvation

## Pray

I thank You, my Father, for the salvation “found in no one else, but Jesus” by whom I am saved.

## Read

EXODUS 13:1–16

## Meditate

**CONSIDER** • The remembrance of our salvation is one of the great motivations for evangelism (see 1 Cor. 11:26). Is this true of us?

**THINK FURTHER** • Before continuing with the dramatic narrative of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, the author continues to discuss the future role that Passover would have in the life of Israel. Throughout their history this festival would continue to be foundational for Israel’s self-understanding and would be developed to speak of God’s redemptive activity in every area of the nation’s history and prophetic future (2 Chron. 35:1). In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Passover marks the foundation and climax of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 2:23,41; 22:1), and in John’s Gospel it is the calendar mark for some of the major points in Jesus’ ministry, being mentioned ten times overall. Paul, in his pastoral ministry, uses the Passover theme as a picture of our holy separation unto the Lord (1 Cor. 5:7). And as we have already seen in the synoptic references, our celebration of Holy Communion and the whole Easter theme is directly linked into the Passover (Matt. 26:28). Israel’s deliverance

from bondage in Egypt is a picture and a foretaste of our greater deliverance from bondage to sin.

In Jewish ritual, the Passover is seen as giving significance to the practice of laying *tephillin*, that is the wearing of leather boxes containing biblical texts, while praying, and of fixing *Mezuzahs* (small parchment scrolls, also containing biblical texts) to the doorframes of houses (Deut. 6:9). As Christians we of course have our own symbols, the cross being the most common. However, whenever it becomes separated from actual biblical texts relating to it, the cross can become emptied of its meaning and be worn or displayed as just an ornament, by believer and unbeliever alike.

**APPLICATION** • What does the “cross” mean to you? “When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died, / My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride” (Isaac Watts). How are you sharing the message of the cross with those who need it?

## Pray

Lord Jesus, may the cross on which You died for me never be just an empty symbol, but a living reminder of Your great love and my salvation.

# The Roundabout Way

## Pray

“When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God, whose Word I praise” (Psa. 56:3). So I praise You now, O Lord.

## Read

EXODUS 13:17—14:9

## Meditate

**CONSIDER** • In what areas are we prone to take “shortcuts”? Which are valuable and which are not?

**THINK FURTHER** • Given that God has engineered the Israelites’ release from Pharaoh, it should be no surprise to discover he has also determined their route to the Promised Land. He has chosen for them the long road. They will not travel along the Mediterranean through the land of the Philistines, but “the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea” (17,18, NRSV), south, along the west coast of the Sinai peninsula. Little did they realize that this was a journey which would take 40 years to complete (Deut. 1:2,3).

“The roundabout way of the wilderness” becomes a manifesto for the exodus journey. Its purpose is for the people’s safety (13:17), their spiritual growth and God’s glory (14:4). Knowing how they need reassurance and protection, God has provided a symbol of his constant presence and guidance. In front of their very eyes is a pillar of cloud each day and a pillar of fire each night. There is no shortcut from slavery to freedom. It is as if these new-born people must learn

to walk. They do not know the dangers; they do not realize their ignorance; they do not comprehend God’s glory. It seems that it takes at least a generation under the Lord’s guidance to form the Israelites into his holy nation, who have learned enough about themselves and their Savior to live by faith in the land of promise. And so with us. The desert fathers (hermit and monastic Christians following the tradition of Anthony of Egypt, from the fourth century onwards) chose to live in the wilderness so they could focus completely on spiritual growth and God’s glory. Into what parts of the world’s wilderness might God be leading you, led by the promised “pillar” of his Holy Spirit?

**APPLICATION** • Do you ever become impatient with God’s “slow” leading in your life? How have you seen God’s leading hand in your past? Are you willing to follow where he leads, however long it takes?

## Pray

Lord, I give You my hand and ask You to lead me on, wherever and however You know is best for me. Lead on, Lord. I trust You.

# God's Work of Salvation

## Pray

Lord, thank You for Your amazing grace that reached down to save sinners like me.

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## Read

EXODUS 14:10-31

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## Meditate

**CONSIDER** • “You did not choose me, but I chose you...to go and bear fruit” (John 15:16). What a privilege to be chosen!

**THINK FURTHER** • The crossing of the Red Sea provides, for Israel, the definitive understanding of God's deliverance in history. Rather than dwell on literal details of where the waters parted and how (the text does not aim to provide such historical details), the story invites us to understand some of the theological truths about salvation which are contained within it. First, this salvation is entirely the result of God's initiative. God appeared to Moses at the burning bush “out of the blue,” asking him to rescue his people from Egypt (3:1-10). He was responding to a situation of oppression, but, more fundamentally, he was continuing to bring about his promises through this people who had begun with Abraham (Gen. 12:23). Similarly, the birth of Jesus—God-made-man—was entirely an initiative of God, and a continuation of God's commitment to his people.

Second, the once-for-all delivering “act” at the Red Sea is part of a longer story; embracing God's

salvation is an on-going process for the Israelites. The Red Sea act is the focal point and it is definitive; but it does not stand alone. The transformation of those who were saved at the Red Sea must follow, as we discover from the tales in the wilderness. The same is true of the life of discipleship and service that follows from embracing Christ's death and resurrection. Salvation is God's gift, but it demands our cooperation; and, ultimately, our obedience. For Christians, the exodus deliverance foreshadows the deliverance of Christ. Without it, we are resigned to “slavery” and destined for “drowning,” but in Christ we are saved by God's initiative and invited to respond with lives that recall and respond to God's amazing grace.

**APPLICATION** • Is God's “amazing grace” too often taken for granted? How are you responding to his gift of “undeserved grace”? With whom can you share it today?

## Pray

Lord, thank You for Your marvelous grace that pardons and cleanses me from sin. Help me to faithfully tell of that grace that is free to all who will receive it.

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# Glory to God Alone

## Pray

Lord, there is no one like You—"majestic in holiness, awesome in glory" (11). I bring You my praise and worship.

## Read

EXODUS 15:1-21

## Meditate

**CONSIDER** • "By grace you have been saved through faith ... it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8,9 NRSV).

**THINK FURTHER** • Here is the song of praise and triumph which flows out of a people who have been rescued from death. It is the same refrain as sung by the apostle Paul centuries later. Exaltation breaks forth like a powerful flood, a jubilant song made up of variations on a single theme. There is no room for boasting about anything other than the Lord's gratuitous love for Israel. When the people are saved they lack even faith, not to mention deeds, upon which to build their hope. It is only *after* their rescue that we find it stated that they believed in the Lord (14:31).

Despite Israel's total victory over the Egyptians in military terms, there is not a hint of any self-righteous triumphalism. The introductory words set the tone for the whole hymn: "I will sing to the LORD, for *he* has triumphed gloriously..." (1, NRSV). The words "the LORD," "God," "he," "you," "your" reverberate from beginning to end and leave us with no doubt

as to who the victorious champion is. It is *his* right hand, and not that of Moses, that has acted. Both the tragic destruction of the Egyptians and the role of Moses are downplayed—even ignored—while the power of the Lord is proclaimed with unabated intensity.

The song is not just about what has happened. It is also about the future. The passage begins with the words, "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD," yet the structure of the Hebrew language is not like that of English. The word translated as "sang" here has a sense that encompasses both past and future action. The liberation just experienced is not complete, as the song is not complete—yet. Now look up Revelation 15:3!

**APPLICATION** • "To God be the glory, great things he has done, So loved he the world that he gave us his Son..." (Fanny Crosby). What great things has he done for you? Are you giving him the glory for the great things he has done and for his "unfailing love"? In some special way today, give God glory for all he has done for you.

## Pray

I bring You my praise and love, O Lord, for "in Your unfailing love You will lead" me, and "in Your strength You will guide" me. To You be glory and honor.

# The School of the Soul

## Pray

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah...I am weak but Thou art mighty; hold me with Your pow’rful hand” (Wm. Williams).

## Read

EXODUS 15:22—16:8

## Meditate

**CONSIDER** • “You...were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:13). What does “freedom” mean to you?

**THINK FURTHER** • It has been said before, “It is easier to take Israel out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of Israel.” The song of praise has barely finished before the people’s cry turns to a murmuring complaint. Three days ago God held back the waters of the Red Sea; now, they are worried about a shortage of water!

They take their concern to Moses (15:24) who takes it directly to God (15:25). God wastes no time responding and the bitter water is made sweet. What’s more, God offers great reassurance of protection, so long as the Israelites are careful to listen to his voice and obey his commands (15:26). Indeed, the next place they stay is a five-star campsite, overflowing with 12 springs (one for each tribe) and 70 palms (the number of fullness). For contemporary parallels, you may picture a swimming pool and a jacuzzi too! God provides his people with everything they need to follow him; indeed, more than they need.

Here, we discover how freedom is not a once-for-all event. It has to be learned, again and again. That is why Israel has to spend such a long time in the desert: it is a school for the soul. The redeemed people are still at the stage of my baby son, who, when he feels hungry, yells for milk with a piercing scream as if to alert the local social services—just in case his mother has forgotten him or abandoned him. He has no memory of the last time he was hungry, when milk was provided within a couple of minutes.

**APPLICATION** • Where are you in your “school of the soul”? Do you find it easier to complain to God than to thank him? Is your faith growing in times of uncertainty? Will you trust and praise God today, whatever the circumstances might be?

## Pray

Lord, help me to see You at work in my life, whatever testing I may face. May the testing be a time of growth in the “school of my soul.”

# Grumbling, Gluttony, Grace

## Pray

Thank You, Lord, for the Bread of Life. May I feed upon it today and be grateful.

## Read

EXODUS 16:9-36

## Meditate

**CONSIDER** • Do you ever “grumble” over things in your life? See the signs of God’s grace in every circumstance.

**THINK FURTHER** • The Israelites surely should have known by now that God is with them in the wilderness, guiding and providing for his people every step of the way. Yet they still look backwards, not forwards. Slavery has curbed their freedom of imagination as well as their freedom of movement, and they seem unable to conceive of God’s love, his power and his generosity. It is so easy for us to look at the Israelites and see their stupidity and ingratitude—how dare they complain? But they are damaged people who need not only God’s on-going protection and provision, but also his patience and his healing grace. Meanwhile, God reassures them with his continual presence—very literally—in the cloud right in front of their eyes (10).

There are some habits they need to unlearn. When God surrounds them with quail, and with bread—not with meager supplies but with overwhelming quantities—their instinct is to grab it and store it away, in case it runs out

tomorrow. Anyone who recalls war-time shortages or grew up during the Depression, might remember or still retain the impulse to do the same. God wants them to learn to rely on him daily: a very hard lesson for those who have suffered shortage, or experienced a betrayal of trust. It is helpful to consider the Sabbath command in the context of learning to trust. We can afford *not* to work—to rest—one day in seven because God is our provider and he is no one’s debtor (29). The freedom to cease from our usual occupation is a sign of faith in a God who does not give according to what we deserve. Rather, he blesses us with more than we need.

**APPLICATION** • Has God blessed you with an over-abundance? How are you using what he has given you? Do you trust him enough not to hoard those gifts, but to share them (see Luke 12:48b)? With whom can you share today some of God’s provisions given you?

## Pray

Good and giving Lord, You’ve given me so much, blessed me so greatly. Help me to see how best to use and share all You’ve given me.