

THE SAVING LORD - EXODUS 15:1,2

PICTURES OF GOD IN EXODUS 15 #1

When Marilyn Thompson took her 4 year old daughter to the Pediatrician for a routine checkup, the young girl was understandably nervous. The doctor with his many years of experience with children immediately sensed her hesitancy and did his best to put her at ease. As he looked into her ear with his otoscope, he asked, *Do you think I'll find Big Bird in here?* The little girl just sat there silently. Next, the doctor took his tongue depressor and looked down her throat. *I wonder if I'll find the cookie monster down here,* he asked. But again, she didn't say a word. Finally, the doctor took out his stethoscope and placed it on her chest to listen to the beating of her heart. *Do you think I'll hear Barney in here?* he asked. All of a sudden the young girl piped up. *Oh, no. Jesus is in my heart. Barney is on my underpants.*

I'd say that this young girl had some pretty good theology for a 4 year old. In the midst of her uncomfortable situation, she had not forgotten that Jesus was with her. And the Lord delights in giving his help and salvation in any and every situation.

This morning, we are beginning a series looking at 8 pictures of God that Moses led the Israelites in seeing after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt as found in Exodus 15. The first picture of God that we find is that of the Saving Lord - the God who is both able and willing to come to our defense whenever we are in trouble and call out to Him for help.

The scene is familiar to most of us so we will not belabor it. The Israelites had been down in Egypt for some 400 years. During most of that time, they had been enslaved by the Egyptian people. The Israelites had been forced to do the grunt labor in building projects for their masters. Finally, the pressure had become so great that the people had cried out to God for salvation. In response to their cries for help, God according to His providential timetable had raised up a leader named Moses. Moses had courageously confronted the Pharaoh of Egypt demanding that he free God's people from slavery. At first, the Pharaoh predictably just laughed in Moses' face. *Why should I release this valuable national resource?* But as God through Moses brought plague after plague upon the nation of Egypt, Pharaoh's heart was changed until finally the Israelites were released in freedom. But no sooner had the Israelites enjoyed a few hours of breathing free air than Pharaoh changed his mind. *What have I done letting all this free labor go? I must recapture them,* he thought. So Pharaoh led his armies in a chase to recapture the defenseless Israelites. He caught up with the Hebrews quickly pinning them against the Red Sea. They couldn't outrun the Egyptian armies and there was no place to hide. The Israelites realized that they were doomed to return as slaves to

the land of Egypt once again. But the same God who had saved them from the hand of Pharaoh in the first place quickly came to their aid again. He brought a thick cloud to temporarily separate the Egyptian army from the Israelites while he caused the waters of the Red Sea to part as Moses stretched the rod in his hand over them. The Israelites crossed over the Red Sea on dry ground. Then God lifted the cloud so that the Egyptian armies could see the Hebrews escaping. With a rush, the Egyptians drove their chariots down through the watery tunnel. In the middle of the river bed, the Lord caused the wheels to come off of the chariots. And while the Egyptian soldiers were in a state of panicked disarray, Moses stretched his hand back over the Red Sea from the other side and the waters crashed back down upon them. Finally, the Israelites were freed from the Egyptian threat. Finally, they could breathe a collective sigh of relief and go to sleep at night without dreaming that the Egyptians were coming after them.

We can understand why they wanted to party. And the great celebration that they had centered around the greatness of the Lord who had showed himself to be superior to the gods of the Egyptians. I'm going to invite you to read this great song that Moses and the Israelites sang to honor the Lord. As we read together, try to imagine the exhilaration that the Israelites must have been feeling as they now realized that they were free at last from their lives of slavery.

READ EXODUS 15:1-18

It should not surprise us that Moses directs the attention towards the Lord in painting 8 magnificent pictures of God in this song of praise. And it further should not surprise us that the first picture of God is of the Saving Lord - for the Lord had just delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians in an awesome manner.

As we look specifically at the first 2 verses of this song of praise this morning, I would direct your attention to 3 observations.

1. Moses and the Israelites recognized the Lord as the source of their salvation. READ 1:1,2a

¹ Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. ² The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

Now it is interesting to note the 2 areas that Moses singles out in his praise song to the Lord as his salvation. He says the Lord is both my strength and my song.

*The term strength emphasizes the mighty power of the Lord physically delivering his people from oppressing hands.

*The term song just means a hymn of praise, a melody from the heart.

*The first term, strength, speaks to the physical deliverance that God had wrought on their behalf

while the second term, song, speaks to the emotional lift that God had given to his people.

*Now we can see why Moses would emphasize both of these, can't we? The Israelites had just suffered real, physical oppression. The Egyptian foremen who had barked out orders to them, the leather whips that had scourged their backs if they moved too slowly, the bricks and mortar that they used to construct those buildings were real, physical entities. And these physical symbols were like a ball and chain connected to their ankles, keeping them from the freedom that they so desired. The greatest of these physical obstacles, of course, were the Egyptian soldiers who represented the strength and power of their oppressors.

But these were not the only opposing forces that the Israelites faced. Having been bound for so many generations as slaves had taken a toll on them emotionally as well. They had been treated as things, as property, as tools for Egyptian industry. This certainly had damaged their self-esteem and sense of self-worth. They were not only physically enslaved, but they were emotionally damaged as well. But now God had saved them. He had delivered them. The picture of the Egyptian soldiers being deluged by the waters of the Red Sea was still fresh in their minds as they had experienced firsthand the strength of the Lord. Certainly God was far mightier than those Egyptians who they had formerly feared.

But God had done more than just save them in a physical sense. He had revealed to them that they were His people. He had showered His love upon them. He had assured them of their importance to Him. God had loved them enough to deliver them and He promised to lead them to a new land flowing with milk and honey. They were not worthless nothings, property to be used or discarded, but they were rather God's chosen people, people who were of great value to God himself, people for whom God would sacrifice. Certainly, God was both their strength and their song - He was both the source of their physical deliverance and he was the source of their emotional salvation as well.

Now it is important for us recognize God as our salvation in both the physical and emotional arenas of life. The Lord is a Saving God. He delights in saving His people. Nothing brings God great joy than responding to the call of his people for help and bringing deliverance to them.

*Sometimes we have need of physical deliverance. There are times when we face concrete dangers. The tire that blows out on our car as we are speeding down the highway; the work situation that has become intolerable for us; the x-ray that reveals a malignant tumor growing within our body. These are real, concrete situations that cannot be wished away. But as we call upon the Lord in our time of trouble, He promises to come to our aid, giving his strength to us in our time of need.

Other times we face emotional battles. And these can be even more difficult to face because they are

so abstract - we often can't put our fingers on the enemy. The guilt that we feel never having been able to live up to our parents' expectations; the discouragement that overwhelms us as we get criticized over and over again at work; the depression that we feel as our body goes through a period of hormonal change. Even though we can't quite put our fingers on the problem, these times are just as real in our lives and cause internal struggles. But as we call upon the Lord in our times of emotional struggle, he will come to our aid as the Saving Lord. He will not only be our strength, but he will also be our song. He will bring the joy and praise to our hearts that we desire.

Moses and the Israelites had just experienced the Saving Lord. He had both delivered them from the physical bondage of Egyptian slavery and had given them new hope in their lives. So Moses sings - The Lord is my strength and my song. But now let's move to a second observation - Moses goes on to say *He has become my salvation*.

2. A second observation that we can make from this passage is that God offers his salvation today to us through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I know what you are thinking. Wait a minute, preacher. Aren't you making quite a stretch here? Moses lived 1500 years before Christ was born. How can you possibly see the Lord Jesus Christ in this passage? Well, if you will just stick with me for a moment here, I hope that it will become clear to you as it has in my study this past week to me.

The Hebrew word that is translated *salvation* here is *yesh oo waw*. Some of you will recognize that Hebrew term immediately. *Yesh oo waw* is the Hebrew word for Jesus. Jesus is simply our English pronunciation of *yesh oo waw*. So we could translate Exodus 1:2 - The Lord is my strength and my song, He has become my *Yesh oo waw* or Jesus.

Now we certainly don't presume that Moses knew the full extent of what he was singing here. To claim that Moses knew all about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God would be presumptuous indeed. But we do know all about it because we live 2,000 years after the fact. And we do have the record of the angel who appeared to Joseph as recorded in Matthew 1:21. The angel said of Mary, *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Yesh oo waw, Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21.*

Now it is important for us to recognize the fact that God's salvation today, physically and emotionally and spiritually and in every other way, comes through the person and work of the one whose name is salvation - the Lord Jesus Christ. That was foretold by Moses long before Jesus was born. Whereas God worked in the miraculous way of parting the Red Sea in the past, today he has provided His salvation through

the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews started his book with the words, *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Hebrews 1:1,2*

Now this is critical for each of us to realize. For if salvation is to be experienced, it must be secured from the right source. Too often, people forfeit the deliverance that they need and seek because they are looking for it in the wrong place.

William McKinley was our 25th President, serving the term that spanned our nation entering the 20th century. It was at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, N.Y. that he delivered one of his most important speeches on international trade. *By sensible trade relations which will not interrupt our home production, we shall extend the outlets for our increasing surplus. . .The period of exclusiveness is past.*

The day after delivering this speech, while attending a public reception in the exposition's Temple of Music, President McKinley was shot. The best doctors available were called as he was rushed into one of the Exposition tents, away from the pressing crowds. The best surgeon available arrived, but he could not find the 2 bullets that were lodged in the President's body. About a week later, William McKinley died.

Ironically, just one tent over from where the President was being examined by the surgeon, there was a brand new machine being introduced to the world through that exposition. It was called an x-ray machine.

Today, if that situation were to occur, the first thing any competent surgeon would do would be to order an x-ray to find the exact location of the bullets. But nobody consulted that first x-ray machine probably because the doctors didn't know how to use it at that time - and we lost our 25th President.

There are many today who sense the need for salvation. They wrestle with guilt because of sin. They are aware of their own weaknesses and need for a deliverer. But they are seeking salvation where it cannot be found. They might be very sincere in their efforts. But the fact remains that true salvation can only be obtained if the right source is consulted. In a sermon to the Sanhedrin, the Apostle Peter said, *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12.*

If a person is to find spiritual salvation, that person must find it in the one whose name is salvation - Yesh oo waw - Jesus, the Son of God.

3. Finally, the only appropriate human response to the Biblical revelation of God being the Saving Lord is to accept God's salvation and exalt God for providing it for us. READ 15:2b

He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

*The Hebrew word that is translated *praise* here is most interesting. It is the word *navah* which literally means to *prepare a dwelling, to make a place to abide*. The KJV tries to capture this flavor of meaning in its translation. It reads *I will prepare Him a habitation*. The NIV attempts to interpret Moses' use of this word. Obviously, in the context of joy and celebration, Moses is speaking of giving the Lord a special place in his heart and life for praise and adoration. So the NIV translates it *I will praise Him*. But whatever the rendering of this Hebrew word that we really don't have an exact English equivalent for, the spiritual truth is obvious. As we begin to realize God's salvation, our natural response is to make a place for Him in our lives where He is invited to come and dwell with us, where we exalt and praise His name for all that He has done for us.

That's what the Israelites did some 3,500 years ago. They were hopelessly mired in their slavery, unable to extricate themselves. So in admitting their helplessness, they cried out to God for a deliverer. They opened their hearts to God and asked him for His help. And God provided Moses as a leader for them and through him executed the miraculous plagues that eventually brought them to their freedom. After they had experienced God's deliverance, they took time to exalt and praise God for his salvation. A short while later, they actually built a tabernacle where God could dwell in their midst, where God could continually receive their offerings, where God could continually receive their worship.

Now we follow a similar pattern today. We must first of all come to the place where we admit our inability to save ourselves. We must realize the spiritual helplessness of our condition. The problem with too many people is that deep down inside they still hold onto that hope that somehow they might be able to save themselves in some way and that hinders them from truly inviting the Lord Jesus Christ into their lives as their savior. If we truly recognize the helplessness of our spiritual condition, we will be lead to make a place of dwelling in our hearts and lives for God. We will invite the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives. We cannot do this on our own, but God will help us. He will give us the strength and grace that we need as our Salvation.

And then we will exalt Him. As we experience the saving power of the Lord, we will lift him up in our lives. Our relationship with Him will become the highest priority in our life. Our love for God will be greater than all the other loves in our life. The whole purpose of our life will revolve around building his eternal kingdom in whatever way that he has called us to. Our goal will be to glorify God in all that we do or say. We will experience in our lives the joy that Moses revealed in this song. The Lord will indeed become our strength and song as he becomes our salvation. And He will be exalted as we give Him His rightful place, offering our lives as a home for His dwelling.