

## Wednesday Encouragement

September 2, 2020

Happy Wednesday! One of my favorite things over the past few years has been diving into what the Bible says about praise and worship with our worship teams. This particular study is one that we need constantly reminded of, as did the Israelites:

The first song of the Bible is recorded in Exodus 15. In the previous chapters of Exodus, the Israelites go from being enslaved in Egypt to being miraculously saved from their captors by some ridiculous circumstances. There's literally a pillar of cloud leading them across the desert in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. After Pharaoh lets them go, he changes his mind and, just when they think they're done for, the Lord parts the Red Sea so the entire nation can walk through on dry ground. He then uses the water rushing back to its place to demolish the Egyptian army as they pursue the Israelites. These are some crazy, life-changing, miraculous kind of circumstances. So once they're safely across the Red Sea and their enemies are no longer a threat, we read the song of praise they sang in Exodus 15:1-21.

This is a great song of praise and I believe it's a great example to us of how we should live our lives. Praising God for the good things that He is doing. Singing is a natural way to do that. Matthew Henry's commentary on this chapter says, "Singing is as much the language of holy joy as praying is of holy desire." And I love that they go straight to singing after this event takes place. Sometimes we're quick to just want to rehash everything that's happened, to marvel in the goodness of a thing without actually taking the time to give credit where credit is due. Again, Henry says this "When the mercy was fresh, and they were much affected with it, then they sang this song." When a good thing, a good gift, a good whatever from God is fresh in our minds and hearts, it's easier to praise Him because of it—because it's still affecting our emotions.

This praise, however, this attitude of gratefulness and remembering where the good comes from, it has to continue and not just be done only immediately after whatever good thing has happened. And we see this time and time again in the stories of the Israelites. They go from praising God for a miracle to complaining and turning away from God, to God saving them again—and then they cycle back to turning away from God, over and over and over. In fact, we see that in this very same chapter--in the very next paragraph--that after three days, they're complaining again—*Why were the Israelites complaining this time?* Because they were having trouble finding good water. *Do you see anything ridiculous about this situation?*

THREE days after the Red Sea is parted. It seems absurd that they can go from this scene of celebratory praise to complaining about water so quickly. Do you know what it does NOT SAY in this passage? It never once says that they asked God for help.

*Are we ever guilty of this too? Of praising God for one thing and then complaining about something else without having even asked God for help?*

I know we are guilty of the same thing sometimes. We can trust God to get us across the Red Sea or through whatever this major crisis in our life is, but we don't ask him for simple things—like water for the Israelites or maybe simple guidance in our everyday lives. The Israelites believed He created the universe. They believed He created the same water that they couldn't find. But they didn't think to ask Him for help. After their grumbling, Moses asks God and they're led to a place with 12 springs and 70 palm trees---a literal oasis. *And if you know what's next in the story, what do they complain about next?* Food—in the next paragraph. Manna & Quail is God's response.

One of the best ways we can stay focused on God and on His goodness is by talking about it, thanking Him for it, sharing it with others and singing about it—all the time. There are numerous times in the Psalms where the writer talks about having God's praise always on his lips—the guy who wrote most of the Psalms was known as “A Man After

God's Own Heart." Perhaps we should follow David's lead here, too, and make sure that we are more likely to have praise on our lips than anything else.

Psalm 145:4 says that each generation should tell its children of God's mighty acts and power—I think that might be part of the key here. The term here in Hebrew is actually *shabach*, a term for worship---the kind of worship that means "to laud, praise, comment, boast—with implications of soothing and stilling someone. " I think it shows us that when we are actively telling the next generation of God's goodness and faithfulness, we have the power to share with them God's peace for their lives—to help soothe and still them—and, as we share it with others, we remind ourselves to keep our eyes fixed on Him and His goodness.