

## “God Always Wants to Work in Your Life”

*Psalm 114*

Each Passover, Jewish families gather together to remember the exodus, when God brought Israel out of Egypt. They recall through Scripture reading, prayer, songs and food that symbolically recalls specific events about how God did it. But the Passover concludes with anticipation that God will rescue His people from their present turmoil and fulfil His promise to send the Messiah. A contemporary tradition to the Passover, added long after Jesus was on earth was to add a fifth cup wine to the meal called the Cup of Elijah and a child is sent to open the door and look to see if Elijah has come yet. Because Malachi 4 says and Jesus affirmed it, that the Messiah will not return until Elijah appears first.

Ps. 113-118 are called the Egyptian Hallel because they were sung at the Passover, remembering when God brought out His people Israel from Egyptian slavery. Ps.'s 113-114 were sung at the beginning of the meal and Ps.'s 115-118 at the end. The first Hallelujah psalm praises God for what He has done for His people; He has reversed their fortunes. He stoops down sees their plight and lifts the poor and barren into places of position by providing for them. As Jesus would have sung this at the Last Passover with the disciples, He was really singing about Himself, having not only stooped down but came in the flesh to offer eternal life and a future hope in God's kingdom.

As Jesus sings this second psalm about God's work in Israel's life what further implications did it have for them and has for us today? The psalm sings of God's work of grace in His people's lives but it also anticipates that God is not done working in His people's lives. Maybe you feel as many Jewish people celebrating Passover all their life feel; that yes, I know God did great works in the past but what about now, what about the future? Nothing seems to change. My circumstances don't seem to be getting better. I've prayed for this situation to change, for this person to change, for God to work in my life, but nothing seems to change. Will it?

The key to believing God can work in the future is we have to continually ...

### **Remember the Great Works of God in Your Life** **(Ps. 114:1-6)**

The first word “when” can be easily skipped over but its rather important. Because when means something happened at a specific time and place. “When Israel came out of Egypt” refers to that time when Egypt held power over Israel; when Israel was trapped in slavery and no recourse of their own to escape. They cried out to God for help and He put His plan in place to rescue them from slavery.

But spiritually speaking, we too need to remember the time when God led us out of our spiritual slavery, when He ...

#### ***Rescued us from slavery to sin (v.1)***

The apostle Paul uses the word ‘slavery’ when he speaks about our former life before coming to faith in Christ. In Rom. 6:6-14 Paul says,

<sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

"When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue" refers to their slavery. When they served a taskmaster. When they had no other option but slavery. Spiritually speaking, we need to remember when God rescued us from the power of sin, when we served it as our master – unknowingly for the most part. Like Israelite slaves it was the only life we knew. But, God in His grace used messengers to bring God's Word of freedom to us and by the power of His Spirit working in us, He opened our heart to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even salvation is a gift of grace, for Paul said in Titus 3:4

<sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Again, the exodus serves as a spiritual metaphor because it was totally an act of God who broke into their lives through His mediator Moses, using him to lead Israel out as he obeyed God. So, not surprisingly, God said in Deut. 18 He would send another 'Moses' and we are to listen to Him. When Jesus began His ministry, He proclaimed a message of freedom. In His home town Nazareth, He opened the scroll to Is. 61 and read,

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus was there to tell them freedom for prisoners, the poor, the blind and the oppressed is available through the good news He proclaimed. The good news being that He, the Messiah has come to offer them eternal life if they believe in Him. This eternal life involves the forgiveness of sins. This is the slavery everyone is in and Jesus alone can free us from that by the work He did on the cross. Our response is to humble ourselves and confess we are in sin and need forgiveness and want the freedom from sin's penalty (eternal separation from God) and sin's power (now).

Jesus sang at the Passover about remembering God's saving the Israelites from slavery for the purpose of

**Coming to dwell in us (v.2)**

*When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, <sup>2</sup> Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion*

God's plan has always been to dwell in the midst of His people. He brought them into the wilderness where He appeared to them in His glory and walked with them daily by the fire at night and the cloud by day. He asked them to build a moving sanctuary (the Tabernacle) which represented His presence. Again, this pictures so well what Jesus did. He became flesh and dwelt with the people of Israel. And after the Passover meal He told His disciples that He would leave but He would not abandon them. John 14:16-17 reminds us

*<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

When did He come to dwell in us? When we believed.

*Eph. 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

God saved Israel from slavery so He could dwell with them. God saved us from the slavery of sin so He could dwell in us. Again, we note the irony as Jesus sang this song with His disciples that they still were not completely convinced this was God dwelling in their presence. The whole point of salvation/deliverance is not so much that we will get to heaven but that heaven will get in us! This is what it means to have eternal life; God's presence dwelling in us now and forever.

So the song before the Passover begins, is a reminder of what God did for His people Israel, rescuing them from slavery, so he could dwell in their midst and He made this possible by

### ***Performing miracles in their life (vv.3-6)***

The psalm remembers three specific events in a very poetic style;

*<sup>3</sup> The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back;*

*<sup>4</sup> the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. <sup>5</sup> Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back, <sup>6</sup> you mountains, that you skipped like rams, you hills, like lambs?*

The sea being the parting of the Red Sea when Israel left Egypt. The turning back of the Jordan when they entered the promised land. Again, both miracles; miraculous bookmarks of them leaving Egypt and entering the Promised Land. But then he mentions the mountains and hills skipping; an obvious anthropomorphic way of saying they shook! When did that happen? Ex. 19:16-19

*<sup>16</sup> On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, <sup>19</sup> and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.*

The mountains quaked and moved when God's presence came down and the voice of God was heard. Obviously hearing God speak audibly is a powerful miracle. But the reason why Moses would be called up to the mountain was to receive the Word of God. Salvation is the act of God where He opens our hearts and minds to understand who He is, a holy forgiving God; who we are, sinners separated from God because of our disobedience and unbelief; who Jesus is, God's Son who took on flesh, lived a sinless life and died for our sins, rising from the dead and what we need to do, repent of our sins and believe on Jesus Christ. How do we understand this? By the Word of God. When the Word of God speaks into our life, is it not a miracle? That the God of the universe speaks through His inspired Word and our hearts are opened to it or convicted of sin, or encouraged to live for Him?

Our salvation is the miraculous work of God in our life. The apostle Peter says in 1 Pet. 1:3

*<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time*

And then in his second letter he points out how this miraculous power to save us is still working in us:

*<sup>3</sup> His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup> Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

As we remember the times when God worked greatly in our life, we recall when He provided what we needed; He led us where we needed to go; He answered our prayer when we needed wisdom and direction; He blessed us when we trusted in His great and precious promises.

The Passover celebration was a reminder of the great works God had done in the life of Israel as well as in your own life. As Jesus sang the song with His disciples, He was identifying with God's work in history – but the song continues at v. 7 – He was also challenging us to ...

## **Believe God is Not Finished Doing Great Works** **In our Life (114:7-8)**

Hours from this Passover Jesus would die. The disciples' world was shaken. They thought there was no hope. But they failed to listen to Jesus' promise that He would rise and when He ascended into glory in Acts 1, that

***He is coming again for us (v.7)***

Vv.1-6 recall the past works of God but vv.7-8 challenge the world to get ready for more!

*<sup>7</sup> Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,  
at the presence of the God of Jacob,*

In other words, He's going to do some more earth shaking. In between the parting of the water miracles the psalmist praises God for His Word – for which the earth shook. And here was Jesus,

living on the earth, hours away from His crucifixion and death. And what was one of miracles that happened at the moment of His death? The day turned dark. The veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom. And the earth shook and the rocks split (Matt. 27:52) and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.”

And guess what’s going to happen when Jesus returns in power to defeat all His enemies and establish His kingdom?

*Zech. 14:4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. <sup>5</sup> You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.*

*<sup>6</sup> On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. <sup>7</sup> It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. <sup>8</sup> On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.*

*<sup>9</sup> The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.*

God is not done doing great works. He’s done it before and He’s going to do it again and He’s still working now. God is committed to conforming each of His children into the image of His Son, Jesus. That means holy and sinless. That means God has the power to miraculously change our attitudes, our sinful tendencies, our lack of fruit of the Spirit and make us fruitful. And of course

### ***He can create life from that which is dead (v.8)***

The psalm ends with a future anticipation that the earth better get ready for more of God’s miraculous power. Because He’s the God who can bring water from a rock. Flowing water from a dead, lifeless rock. Spiritual life from dead souls. And perhaps to emphasize this he mentions it twice because God did it twice in Israel’s wilderness wanderings. God miraculously provided water where logically, geographically and humanly speaking there should not have been water there. Yet God brought life-giving water from a dead object.

*Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

And that’s always the challenge isn’t it? In less than 24 hours after Jesus sang this song His body would lie dead in a tomb. I’m sure the disciples were beside themselves with disappointment and grief. But Jesus told them He would rise; would they trust and believe that God can bring that which is dead to life?

When Jesus died the earth shook. That was God speaking to Jesus’ followers ‘Don’t worry, I’m still in control. Something else is coming.’ To the world the earth shaking was ‘You better get ready. Because My Son is coming back to life and one day He’ll come back to this earth and change things forever!’ And we know that is true in our heads but like the disciples in our pain in the present, in our fear of the unknown future, as we see dead-end situations and lifeless souls and broken relationships, do we believe that God is still bringing life to that which is dead?

The Bible is full of promises that reassure us that God can do what He says. Here’s just two;

*Phil. 1:3 I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being*

*confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Paul prayed with joy thanking God for each believer because he believed by faith God was going to bring each one into full maturity in Jesus Christ. So when we pray for each other, for God to change our attitudes and hearts we need to pray with faith believing that God can change us as well as those we are struggling to see spiritual growth. Jesus assures us He will keep those who know Him as His own and no one can snatch them out of His father's hand. God is and will conform us into the image of His Son. That gives us the confidence to pray for God to do the work that He has promised He will do. And this is what the psalm reminds us of. Jesus was singing with His disciples about all the miraculous things God had done in the life of His people. Do we believe He is still working and capable of bringing life out of that which appears it is impossible to produce life?

*Eph. 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

And the apostle Paul reassures us that God can do beyond what we're asking. When we come to the Red Seas, we look for how to go around it but God says 'Let's go through it!' When we're looking for an oasis in the desert, God says, 'Let's just use that rock.'

When you're doubting about God's ability to change your future, remember what He did in Your past. We were once dead in our sins but now we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. He is dwelling in us. He's given us His Word. He's warned the earth that He's not done yet. We need to believe He's not done working in us.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at [olivet@rideau.net](mailto:olivet@rideau.net)