Moses July 3, 2022

2 of 6 in *Faith Heroes: Lessons to Help You Face a Crisis* Exodus 15:1-21

Last Sunday we began a new series called *Faith Heroes: Lessons to Help You Face a Crisis*. Across this series, we're looking at six Old Testament faith heroes and discovering lessons from their stories that can help us face the crises we encounter—especially in the heightened time of crisis we find ourselves living in these days.

The faith hero we're looking at today is Moses. We're going to explore a particular passage that captures several lessons from Moses' story that can help you face a crisis.

Just before we go to the passage, allow me to set the stage a bit.

The book of Exodus describes how the people of Israel have been slaves in Egypt for four hundred years. Egypt, you see, was the world's greatest superpower of the time—militarily and economically— an economy built on Israelite slave labour.

But God hears the cries of these enslaved people. He acts on his covenant with Israel's forefathers to make a great nation out of Israel. In doing so, God raises up a leader to deliver the Israelites from their bondage— Moses.

God sends Moses to confront Egypt's king— pharaoh— and demand the release of the Israelites. Pharaoh arrogantly and stubbornly refuses, and a showdown ensues. In a series of ten plagues, the unstoppable power of the one true God and Creator of all—the God of Israel— exposes the so-called gods of Egypt to be no gods at all.

Defeated and distraught, pharaoh finally agrees to let the Israelites go. On the night of Passover, a host of well over 1,000,000 Israelites—men, women and children, along with their animals and whatever possessions they could carry— begin this grand exodus—this journey out of the land where they've been enslaved for so long.

Now to pull off such a journey would be a logistical miracle even if it was nothing more than a backpacking trip. But it wasn't a backpacking trip, was it? It was a chase scene. Because pharaoh—not one to easily admit defeat—decides to send his mighty chariot army after the Israelites.

Most of you know what happens next. God parts the Red Sea, so that the Israelites can pass through to the other side on dry ground. But when pharaoh's army enters the parted sea to chase after them, the great walls of water that had stood up for the Israelites come crashing down on the Egyptians, consuming them entirely.

And it is immediately in the wake of this great victory—with Moses and all Israel standing safely on shore, their jaws gaping in astonishment as the debris swirled in the water before their eyes—that we come to our passage in Exodus 15, known as *The Song of Moses*.

Let's take a look at it now, starting with verses 1-2:

> Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord:
>
> "I will sing to the Lord,
> for he has triumphed gloriously;
> he has hurled both horse and rider
> into the sea.
> The Lord is my **strength** and my **song**;
> he has given me victory [or **salvation**].
> This is my God, and I will praise him—
> my father's God, and I will exalt him! [1]

Verse two is the heartbeat of Moses' song. It not only provides us with a powerful outline for today's message. It is also one of those places in the Bible where pretty much the whole sweep of scripture gets encapsulated into a single verse, and into three words in particular:

> God is our **strength**, **song**, and **salvation**.

In the time that remains, let's explore each of those words, and how they contain vital lessons to help you face a crisis. In the process, we'll unpack the remainder of The Song of Moses in Exodus 15. First, Moses and the people of Israel sing about how:

1. God is our STRENGTH.

Under the umbrella of this theme of how God is our strength, you'll find one the most fundamental lessons to help you face a crisis that can be learned from the Song of Moses. Here it is: **Don't just ask God to GIVE you strength. Ask God to BE your strength.**

Because there's a difference between the two. You see, it's not that God imparted special strength to Israel so they could stand against the Egyptian army. Instead, God himself WAS their strength.

[1] Exodus 15:1-2 (NLT)

The Red Sea was before them, the Egyptian army behind. The Israelites found themselves hemmed into an impossible situation. Time to panic, right? But Moses assures them:

> The LORD himself will fight for you; just stay calm. [2]

I wonder if God wants to speak that very word into your life today. Maybe you feel as if chariot armies are coming after you, so to speak— financial troubles, a health crisis, broken relationships, trauma from your past that keeps circling back to haunt you. Is God saying to you this day: "I myself will fight for you; just say calm"?

Ask God himself to fight for you, because he alone is strong enough to prevail in the face of any and every battle. As Moses and the people of Israel sing in verses 3 and following:

> The Lord is a warrior;
> Yahweh is his name!
> Pharaoh's chariots and army
> he has hurled into the sea.
> The finest of Pharaoh's officers
> are drowned in the Red Sea.
> The deep waters gushed over them;
> they sank to the bottom like a stone.
> "Your right hand, O Lord,
> is glorious in power.
> Your right hand, O Lord,
> smashes the enemy.
> In the greatness of your majesty,
> you overthrow those who rise against you. [3]

When you face a crisis, do you look to the God who overthrows chariot armies with ease? You see, in ancient times, to have a chariot army was to be unstoppable. Chariot armies rolled right over enemy nations. Chariot armies mowed down all opposition. But in verse 19 of his song, Moses reminds us that:

> When Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers rushed into the sea, the Lord brought the water crashing down on them. But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground! [4]

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[2] Exodus 14:14 (NLT)
[3] Exodus 15:3-7 (NLT)
[4] Exodus 15:19 (NLT)

God became Moses' strength, and Israel's strength, by utterly saving them from a chariot army, making them his very own people. Humanly speaking, there was NO WAY Israel should still be standing at the end of this battle. But they were. Why? Because God himself fought for them. Because God didn't just GIVE them strength. He WAS their strength. Is God your strength today?

In the Bible, we see that God has made the exodus— culminating in the Red Sea victory— a pattern for all his people to live by, including you and me.

It's the pattern in which our false sources of strength are stripped away, so we can learn to depend on God as our only strength. This pattern repeats itself throughout the Bible.

> Why does God instruct future kings of Israel not to accumulate great numbers of horses as a sign of military might? [5]
>
> Why does God have Gideon scale back his army to a ridiculously small size on the eve of battle? [6]
>
> Why does God send the boy David to fight the giant Goliath? [7]
>
> Why does the prophet Elijah pour buckets and buckets of water onto the wood that's piled on the altar before asking God to light it on fire? [8]
>
> Why was the launch of the Christian church, in the midst of the mighty Roman Empire, entrusted to twelve backwoods Israelites? [9]

In all of these accounts along with many others, God reminds us not to trust in our own puny strength, or in other false sources of strength, but to depend on God alone to be our strength. The psalmist once put it this way:

> Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
> but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.[10]

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[5] See Deuteronomy 17:16
[6] See Judges 7
[7] See 1 Samuel 17
[8] See 1 Kings 18
[9] See Acts 1
[10] Psalm 20:7 (NIV)

What have you trusted in this past week, what have you leaned on, other than God? Your smarts? Your skills? Your effort? Your money? Your position? Your way with words— your powers of persuasion? The force of your anger? The mask of self-confidence you like to hide behind?

Where do you tend to look for strength in times of crisis— when life's battles rage—when the chariots are closing in on you? Do you look to God alone to be your strength? Or do you look to other sources?

We're all on a learning curve in this regard, just like Israel was, and God is patient with us.

And we learn best when we **look back to move forward.**

This is another lesson to help you face a crisis. As you remember how God *has been* your strength— and the strength of all his people throughout history— your confidence that God will *continue to be* your strength will grow.

In his song, Moses begins by looking back—looking behind them at the sea— looking back at what God has just done for his people. Starting in verse 9, he sings:

> "The enemy boasted, 'I will chase them
> and catch up with them.
> I will plunder them
> and consume them.
> I will flash my sword;
> my powerful hand will destroy them.'
> But you blew with your breath,
> and the sea covered them.
> They sank like lead
> in the mighty waters.
> "Who is like you among the gods, O Lord—
> glorious in holiness,
> awesome in splendor,
> performing great wonders?
> You raised your right hand,
> and the earth swallowed our enemies. [11]

[11] Exodus 15:9-12 (NLT)

As Moses looks back at the sea, looks back at what God has done—at how God had fought for Israel— he then turns away from the sea and looks forward, across the Sinai desert. He looks forward to the journey ahead of them—a journey where God would take them into the land of Canaan— the Promised Land— where more enemies would be waiting.

But because Moses had been looking back at God's past faithfulness, he was then able to look forward with confidence that the God who had *been* their strength would continue to *be* their strength. We see this in verses 13 and following:

> "With your unfailing love you lead
> the people you have redeemed.
> In your might, you guide them
> to your sacred home.
> The peoples hear and tremble;
> anguish grips those who live in Philistia.
> The leaders of Edom are terrified;
> the nobles of Moab tremble.
> All who live in Canaan melt away;
> terror and dread fall upon them.
> The power of your arm
> makes them lifeless as stone
> until your people pass by, O Lord,
> until the people you purchased pass by.
> You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain—
> the place, O Lord, reserved for your own dwelling,
> the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. [12]

None of this has happened yet. But Moses is confident that it will, because he's looked back to move forward.

When you face a crisis, and you feel like chariot armies are coming for you, look back. Look back at what God has done for his people throughout the pages of scripture. Look back, too, on God's past faithfulness to you personally, bringing it to mind intentionally and giving it voice, thanking God for all he's done. In doing so, you'll not only be reminded that God *was* your strength. You'll also find that God *is* your strength, and always *will be* your strength.

So when facing a crisis*, look back to move forward*.

[12] Exodus 15:13-17 (NLT)

And *don't just ask God to GIVE you strength. Ask God to BE your strength.*

Because no enemy can stand against him. Not pharaoh's chariot armies. Not the Canaanites. Not sin, not death, nor all the powers of hell. With God, the ultimate outcome of the battle is never in question.

Next, our passage also shows us that:

2. God is our SONG.

Check out verses 1-2:

> Then Moses and the people of Israel *sang this song* to the Lord:
>
> "I will *sing* to the Lord,
> for he has triumphed gloriously;
> he has hurled both horse and rider
> into the sea.
> The Lord is my strength and my *song*... [13]

The fact that Moses and the people of Israel *sing* here is significant, because music does something exceptional to words. Put words to music, and they'll get stuck in your head, perhaps even in your heart.

For example, do you know how I learned the 66 books of the Bible in order? Through a rap song. (Imma break it down for you right now! Just kidding...)

Colossians says that the word of Christ will dwell in us richly when we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. [14] Ephesians gives the same counsel, saying:

> Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts.[15]

[13] Exodus 15:1-2a (NLT)
[14] See Colossians 3:16
[15] Ephesians 5:19 (NLT).

What does it mean for God to be your song? God became Moses' song because Moses was drunk—not with wine but with wonder— wonder at who God is and all he had done for Israel— wonder to the point that God had so captured his mind, heart, and imagination that Moses could think of nothing else, and would live for no one else. That's what it means for God to become your song. Has God become your song?

Because that's our next lesson to help you face a crisis: **Make God your song.**

Let God's strength, goodness and faithfulness become the soundtrack of your life. For many of you, a practical way of doing that is with good Bible-based and Jesus-centered worship music. Have good worship music on in the background as you drive, for example, or do household chores. And set aside times for private worship using good worship music. Another practical thing you can do is simply to make a habit of praying prayers of thanksgiving. Every day, thank God for everything you can think to thank him for, and your heart will sing with gratitude for his goodness and grace.

These are just a couple of ways of making God your song, so you can face any crisis with faith.

That's why Moses was singing, and why he got God's people to sing along as well. He knows that they're going to need that song in order to remain faithful and obedient to God as they move toward the Promised Land.

But—and this is important— to have God as our song isn't just about what *we* need. It's also about what *others* need. It's about what the world around us needs. And here we find our next lesson: **When God is your song you share that song with others.**

Israel was called to be a light to the nations, and to have God as their song was to share that song—the song of salvation—with the world.

You see, the more he becomes our song, the more others will be drawn to God through our testimonies of praise and thanksgiving for all God has done for us. To have God as your song—to have his faithfulness as the soundtrack of your life— includes sharing what God has done in your life with others, so God might become their strength and song and salvation as well.

We have a resource that can help equip you to share your faith in Jesus with others. It's called **10 Best Practices for Sharing Your Faith**. You can find it online at the link you see on the screen (www.cornerstonechurch.ca/shareyourfaith), and we have printed copies available on the literature racks in the lobby as well—please help yourself to those.

That brings us to the third key phrase in Moses' song:

3. God is our SALVATION.

The *New Living Translation* of the Bible, which we've been reading from today, puts it this way: "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has given me *victory*" (see v. 2).

But many other translations put it this way:

> The LORD… has become my salvation. [16]

The original Hebrew word for salvation in this passage is *Yeshua*, which means, "The LORD saves." The New Testament Greek translation of the same word is Ιησούς. Who is Ιησούς? It's *Jesus*.

In Matthew 1:21, the angel of the Lord makes this announcement to Joseph about his fiancé Mary:

> "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." [17]

God saved the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, culminating in the Red Sea victory, making them his own people. But these events point forward to a greater salvation still to come— the coming of Jesus, who saves us from our slavery to sin, making us God's own people, now and forever.

The LORD has become my salvation, says Moses. He didn't just GIVE me salvation. God himself has BECOME my salvation. Has he become *your* salvation?

Is it time for you to take the plunge, as it were— not into the Red Sea, but into the waters of baptism? Baptism is the most fundamental rite of passage for making God your salvation in Jesus. We have a baptism service coming up in August. If you're interested in being baptized, or would like to learn more before you decide, please visit the link you see on the screen (www.cornerstonechurch.ca/baptism), fill out the online form, and a pastor will be happy to follow up with you.

[16] Exodus 15:2 (NIV)
[17] Matthew 1:21 (NIV)

It's important to realize that in the Bible—both Old and New Testaments— no event is cited more that the exodus. The Bible constantly looks back to and alludes to and quotes from this defining moment in the history of God's people.

But it's equally important to realize that the exodus points beyond itself to Jesus. The salvation of Israel at the Red Sea was a picture looking forward to a greater exodus, a greater salvation yet to come through the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

In fact, in the book of Revelation, the Apostle John describes a vision God gave him:

> I saw before me what seemed to be a glass sea mixed with fire. And on it stood all the people who had been victorious over the beast and his statue and the number representing his name. They were all holding harps that God had given them. And they were singing *the song of Moses*, the servant of God, *and the song of the Lamb*. [18]

Who's the Lamb? The Lamb is Jesus, slain for the sins of the world, sacrificed so we could be forgiven and made right with God. In John's vision, God's people are standing victorious at the end of the age. They have overcome that beast, the devil, and are worshipping God in song. What song do they sing? *They sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb*.

In this vision, as God's people stand on a symbolic sea of glass singing of their salvation in Jesus, the Lamb, they also sing the song that Moses and Israel sang so long ago on the shores of the Red Sea. Why? Because Israel's salvation at the sea pointed beyond itself to the ultimate victory, the ultimate salvation that Jesus brings through this cross and resurrection. And here's what God's people sang in Revelation 15:

> "Great and marvelous are your works,
> O Lord God, the Almighty.
> Just and true are your ways,
> O **King of the nations**.
> [4] Who will not fear you, Lord,
> and glorify your name?
> For you alone are holy.
> **All nations** will come and worship before you,
> for your righteous deeds have been revealed." [19]

[18] Revelation 15:2-3 (NLT), emphasis added.
[19] Revelation 15:2-3 (NLT), emphasis added.

The song of salvation, you see, is no longer just for Israel. God is no longer just the King of Israel. In Jesus, he has become the King of all nations. And the song of salvation has become a song for all nations—a song for sinners everywhere who embrace God as their salvation through Jesus. Have you embraced the salvation God offers you through Jesus?

So often, Christians think of salvation as going to heaven when you die. But from the Bible's point of view, that's not what salvation is, ultimately speaking. When you think of salvation, don't think about leaving earth to go to heaven. Think of heaven coming down to earth. After all, what does Jesus teach us to pray?

> Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. [20]

In the closing chapters of the Bible, at the end of Revelation, John has another vision, not of people going up to heaven, but of the heavenly city—the New Jerusalem—coming down to earth, where God will dwell forever in the midst of his people, making all creation new—a new heavens and a new earth, where:

> … there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. [21]

In Moses' prayer of victory, we already see signs of God's desire to bring salvation to the ends of the earth, to set all creation right again.

In the Red Sea victory, God brings a part of a broken creation back into alignment with his will. The forces of chaos—represented by the sea— not to mention oppressive power of Egypt with its false gods and unjust enslavement—are subdued by the power of God.

This is a foretaste of what God will ultimately do for the whole of creation, in and through *Yeshua*— Jesus the Lamb.

After the victory at sea, Israel was on the path toward the Promised Land in Canaan. But this was also pointing forward toward the ultimate Promised Land—a restored and renewed creation—a new heavens and a new earth.

At the Red Sea, and throughout the Bible, God's redemptive acts are always aimed toward the ultimate purpose of a new creation, where God will reign forever and ever, over every nation, setting right the entire planet, and the entire cosmos, once and for all.

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[20] See Matthew 6:10
[21] Revelation 3:4 (NLT)

As Moses says in verse 18 of his prayer:

> The LORD will reign forever and ever! [22]

If you are a follower of Jesus, this is your hope in times of crisis—that a day is coming, to use the words of the great Christian mystic Julian of Norwich, when, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

One lesson we learned from Moses for facing a crisis is look back to move forward. A related lesson is this. When facing a crisis: **Look forward to a world forever set right.**

The Red Sea victory points ahead to a greater victory—a greater salvation—that Jesus the Lamb purchased for us through his death and resurrection. In that salvation is the hope that the whole creation will ultimately be set right.

So *look forward to a world forever set right,* and find hope for today. Find all the more confidence to face any crisis with faith, courage and perseverance, because you know that in Jesus, crisis doesn't get the last word. In Jesus, ultimate victory is sure and certain.

In Jesus, God is our strength. In Jesus, God is our song. And in Jesus, God has become our salvation.

COMMUNION

It's time for us to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Just as the exodus was the fountainhead of Israel's worship, the cross of Jesus Christ is the fountainhead of Christian worship. The Lord's Supper involves **looking back** at what Jesus did when he gave his life for us on the cross. We remember his death. We remember that although he himself was without sin, he took our sins upon himself, so that we could be rescued from sin and death.

We remember that in our sin, we had made ourselves enemies of God, and we were the ones who, in a manner of speaking, deserved overturned soaking wet wagon wheels at the bottom of the Red Sea. But because God's love for us is so great, Jesus would willingly be engulfed for us—engulfed in death, engulfed in the tomb— so that we could be found standing safely on the opposite shore, singing salvation's song.

In the Lord's Supper, we also **look forward**. We look forward to the day when Christ's kingdom comes fully, and we share this supper with our Lord in the new heavens and the

[22] Exodus 15:18 (NLT)

new earth, where, death, and sorrow and crying and pain will be no more, and “all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

And as we reach into that past, and we as reach into that future, and we find that Jesus—*Yeshua*—the God who saves— is our strength today, right here, right now. Would you come to his table and commune with him today?