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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] Now as we read through this Psalm 114, this Psalm performs one of a number of Psalms in a section from Psalms 113 through to 118, which are a particular portion known collectively as the Hallel or Praise Psalms, which tended to be used especially at Passover time.

And given the circumstances of the Passover, it is no surprise that at least one Psalm should be devoted to the remembrance of the original Exodus from Egypt.

As you'll be aware, no doubt, most of the Exodus was the collective experience of deliverance and self-identity for the Israelites.

Not because the Hebrews did not exist prior to the Exodus, nor because Jehovah, the God of their fathers, was unknown to them before it, but rather because having grown, or I was going to say evolved, but that is negative connotations nowadays, but having grown certainly from a collection of blood-related families into the numerical strength of a small nation.

The Exodus was the event that saw them publicly and miraculously owned, as it were, owned of God as a nation, and not merely the God of the devout minority in the covenant line.

[1 : 3 6] Nationally speaking, this is the equivalent of, you might say, collective conversion experience. Not that every individual Israelite was thereafter in a state of grace, because obviously they weren't.

I mean, the golden calf and all these other things that happened and all the murmurings, they weren't all individually in a state of grace by any means. But there was this collective conversion experience in the sense that, as a nation, they were now in a unique, covenanted relationship with the Lord, to be his chosen people, and he to be their God as a nation.

Now, obviously the Israelites knew about Jehovah before, but they didn't put their faith in him, simply because they were too ground down to have any hope, let alone faith, that anyone should care for them.

Remember how when Moses first came to them, he said, well, the Lord of your fathers has called you to take you out of Egypt, and they said, oh, that's great, that's great, and then they go and speak to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh says, that's rubbish, I'm just going to put more burden on them, and I'm not going to let them even have time to think about coming out of Egypt.

It's just because they're lazy and idle that they're even thinking in these times. And so we read in Exodus 6, from verse 6, wherefore, the Lord says, say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm of great judgments, and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to your God, and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will bring you in unto the land concerning which I swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it ye for an heritage, I am the Lord.

[3 : 38] And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel, but they hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

That's why they didn't dare to hope. That's why they didn't begin to believe, or to have to, because they were just so grand done. You can imagine their responses in colloquial terms.

Moses comes with these great promises that he's already come with before, and now their situation is even worse than it was before. And they're saying, aye, right, well, talk's cheap, you know, that's one thing to say, but yeah, yeah, we're not delivered yet.

As with the Israelite mission, so an individual soul is only converted when God intervenes directly, and personally, in their life, so that the spiritual change within is matched by actual, and sometimes seemingly miraculous, changes without.

It's important to understand this, that the two mirror each other. If there is the spiritual change within, there will be an actual, and as I say sometimes, miraculously wrought, change without.

[4 : 51] It will be discernible to those around, even without any overt statement. So this was then the nation's collective experience of deliverance, which they were constantly thereafter exhorted to remember, especially in the dark days of suffering, or seeming distance and separation from God, to remember always what he had done, and that he, having thus proved his miraculous love for them once, and being an unchanging God, was well able to help and deliver them again and again, and to honour his holy covenant.

God desires to honour his holy covenant. Were he not inclined to do so, surely he would not have bothered to deliver them from Egypt in the first place.

We look at all the plagues he was in in Egypt, all the destruction that was brought, all the bending, if you like, of nature's rules, in a sense, in order to bring them out.

Why bother? If he's just going to say, oh well, I've changed my mind now. Unless he is an unchanging God, prepared to keep on delivering them, why begin the process in the first place, if he was not inclined to do so?

Likewise, for the individual, if he loved you not, if he who is unchangeable, were of a mind to abandon, or depart from his child, surely, it would have been more consistent of him never to awaken your soul in the first place, never to turn you unto him, never to make you aware of his love for you.

[6 : 39] But he did. If we are in Christ, he did. And he does, and he has not changed. But have you? Have we? Have I changed?

If we are far away from God than once we were, we can be pretty certain as to which one has changed. You know, if a boat is unhitched from the quayside, and it begins to drift away, you can be pretty sure that the jetty on the quayside hasn't suddenly clotted in the water.

It's the boat that has shifted. It is we who have moved away from God, not he who has moved away from us. But if we find ourselves at a greater distance from the Lord than once we were, or than that we would like, what is the remedy?

I would suggest to you it is what is conveyed in this psalm, which is to remember. To remember those days of awakening, of deliverance, of conversion, the free offer of grace, the mighty works of God, and in remembering, to be strengthened in him who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We are to remember also, however, that God, having worked this wondrous miracle of grace, there is a response now required from his people.

[8 : 02] Israel was not saved in a vacuum, and nor are we. Israel was not saved and delivered from servitude and slavery, simply to be delivered into soul destroying, idleness, and inactivity, and indulgence, and nor are we.

Free we are, yes, but freedom must be used, and must be employed for good, or there is very little point in having it.

Israel was saved to serve the Lord. That is what we read if we go back to Exodus again. We see in chapter 7, verse 16, where the Lord speaks to Moses, and says, I shall say unto him, that is unto Pharaoh, the Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness, and behold, hitherto thou wouldst not hear.

Again in chapter 8, verse 1, the Lord spake unto Moses, go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, thus saith the Lord, let my people go, that they may serve me. Again in chapter 9, at verse 13, thus saith the Lord, God of the Hebrews, let my people go, that they may serve me.

This is the purpose of our redemption and our deliverance, whether it is for the Israelites from Egypt, or ourselves, or the state of sin and death.

[9 : 27] This is the purpose of our redemption. We are saved to serve and live, albeit initially, in the barren wilderness of this world, but we are free.

If we are free in Christ, we are saved to serve and live, rather than left to rot and die. Indeed, if we are in Christ, then death has no more power over us.

To do as Paul, it's the Philippines, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. This is your honour and mine, to live to serve to serve the Lord.

If we can go through this short psalm, then, first of all. This verse 1, when Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange languages, this verse indicates to us that through all the long years of slavery, the Israelites had maintained the identity of their own Hebrew language, which was self-eminently different from Egyptian.

Genesis 42, verse 43, tells us that when Joseph's brothers came down into Egypt, it says, they knew not Joseph, and that Joseph understood, therefore he spake unto them by an interpreter.

[10 : 41] He used an interpreter to speak, and obviously by then he knew Egyptian, and he understood their own language, but he used an interpreter, which means Egyptian and Hebrew are not just the same language but a different accent.

Obviously, some of them must have known some Egyptian, just as doubt that some Egyptians, most likely the taskmasters of the slaves, knew some Hebrew, if only to make their commands and orders understood.

But on a national scale, the distinction of their own language was part of their identity. Psalm 81, verse 5, this he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt, where I heard a language that I understood not.

They who are the Lord's people recognize instinctively that this is not their home. Their citizenship is elsewhere. In a very real sense, they speak a different language.

Their citizenship is elsewhere, in a promised land of inheritance and glory, and they speak a different language, the language of love of the Savior, which the world simply cannot understand.

[11 : 57] It cannot understand the nature of true faith. It tries to explain it in terms of a social construct. that these people band together to go through the rituals of worship of their God.

They can understand that there are such things as churches. They can understand there are such things as Christians. They can understand outward ritual. They can understand a certain amount of form. What they cannot understand is this living relationship with the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They cannot understand that relationship. They cannot understand the language that the children of God speak. This is one reason why, you know, if somebody is genuinely a born-again Christian, and they happen to encounter somebody else, perhaps in a totally different country, totally different denomination, totally different cultural background, if they can converse in ordinary language, they'll soon begin by the language that they use to understand whether or not the person they're speaking to is actually a born-again believer or whether they're just somebody who is outwardly culturally Christian, who sometimes goes to church in order to pay a service to the identity of their nation.

Maybe they are outwardly a Scottish Presbyterian, an Irish Roman Catholic, or a Bulgarian Orthodox churchgoer, whatever it might be. That is their outward national identity in its religious expression.

that it's not a living relationship with Christ. Those who do have that living relationship, whether they're Baptists or Episcopalians or Presbyterians or Congregationalists, if they encounter each other and begin to talk about their Saviour, they will soon learn from one another with the language they are using, whether or not that other person is in a living relationship with Christ, whether they have met a brother or sister.

[13 : 54] This is a language which the world simply cannot understand. In verse 2, the reference to both Judah and Israel does not indicate that this psalm was only written after the country split into two separate kingdoms.

Judah is frequently referred to as being distinct, both by way of inheritance and sheer numerical strength. But rather, here the two are spoken of as complementary.

One should build us also the subtle distinction of two spheres of authority, one civil and the other sacred. Judah was his sanctuary and Israel was his dominion.

Notice there's a different distinction there, one civil, the other sacred. Again, with complementarity, mutually supported. Sanctuary is obviously a reference to the spiritual authority, the religious leadership of a nation in its relationship with the Lord Jehovah.

Dominion, which again simply means authority, implies the civil, if not quite secular in the sense that we would understand it, the civil affairs of state, the civil magistrate.

[15 : 06] And together, these two authorities complement one's support, one another, in their different spheres of authority. together establishing the framework of a godly commonwealth, which is exactly the principle behind the establishment of religion in a Christian nation.

That the state is not, and is not meant to be, neutral or secular, but is designed to be intentionally Christian.

The nation's laws and government are meant to be ordered according to the requirements of a godly commonwealth, with the spiritual affairs governed through an established church, ideally, and this, believe it or not, was the vision for Scotland after the Reformation.

The Church of Scotland is technically still so far the established church of the kingdom, just as the Church of England is south of the border. and in Scotland, the courts of the established church, hard as it may be to believe this, the presbyteries and sessions and general assembly in spiritual affairs do still, believe it or not, actually and legally have the status of official courts of the land, just like the court of session in its particular sphere, just like the judicial commission in its official sphere.

The courts of the church in their particular sphere have the authority and the power in the established church, that is, of courts of the land. It's an almost unique situation here, but that is the idea behind the establishment of religion, that it's meant to be a Christian nation, a godly commonwealth, where you have the civil arm and you have the spiritual arm, and they complement one another and support one another, but they don't intermeddle with each other's affairs.

[16 : 56] And ideally, we have this in microcosm here. Judeo is a sanctuary, Israel is dominion. And then from verse 3 to the end here, we see described in short, brief terms, the power of God Almighty over nature, whose laws he himself has established, of which he is capable at his own sovereign direction of suspending, as with the crossing of the Red Sea and the overjoying and the bringing forth of water from the dry rock.

Not all the symptoms describe their necessarily miraculous in the sense of overriding nature. For example, verse 6 is thought to refer to, poetically, to the appearance or the movement of forests on the hillside, swaying in the wind, and as you see the tops of the trees move, it gives the appearance that the hills themselves are skipping and swaying and moving with the strength of the wind.

And that this is thought to be put in poetic terms, why the hills skipped like rams and swayed and moved like little rams jumping on the hillside.

So it's not necessarily describing something you don't mind is bouncing along on the surface of the earth, but rather the appearance of movement, of swaying, of movement to and fro by the force of the wind and the tops of the trees.

And this appearance of movement and of lifting. Verse 7, of course, tremble now earth at the presence of the Lord and the presence of the God of Jacob is perfectly applicable to earthquake or volcanic activity as is implied in Exodus 20 at verse 18.

[18 : 44] All the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountains smoking and when the people saw it, they were moved and stood up far off. Also in Psalm 104, if we were to turn back a couple of pages, we would see verse 32.

He looketh on the earth and it trembleth. He toucheth the hills and the smoke. So that's perfectly, you know, to say, well, this is standard volcanic activity or earthquake-style strength.

It's terrifying, yes, but it's not miraculous in the sense of suspending the laws of nature or overturning them in any sense. In verse 8, the reference to the water of the rock which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters, is stated in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 4 to be the spiritual and, yes, physical as well, work of God the Son and work on earth prior to his incarnation.

1 Corinthians 10 verse 4, they did all drink the same spiritual drink for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

And what Paul is implying here is that, yes, their physical need was met, but their physical need was met only by direct intervention by God the Son who himself slaked their thirst and satisfied their thirst in a physical sense because he was also meeting their need spiritually.

[20 : 19] They'd be their spiritual, I guess, physical deliverer as well from physical thirst. Now, what these verses tell us is that to help and to protect and to safeguard and deliver his chosen people, God is willing at times to suspend or overrule his own laws of nature to bring forth thunder or trembling of the mountains to bring forth fire and fear where there was none by nature to dry up rivers and seas or to turn dry areas into well watered ones that he might bring to pass his gracious will for his people in bringing his own beloved Son from heaven to earth to live and to die for the sins of fallen men and thereby, you might say in all reverence, disturbing the peace and glory of heaven itself.

If we can say it in those terms, is it reverent to say it? Well, I think you understand what I mean. Disturbing the peace and the glory of heaven by taking God the Son out of it for a time.

Quite literally out of it when he became embodied in human flesh. he's no longer reigning there in that sense at the right hand of the Father during that time when he is incarnate, when he's in the womb of the Virgin, when he's the child of Bethlehem or of Nazareth and the man of Galilee.

He's not physically in heaven, but he's physically upon earth. And when the Lord does that, taking God the Son out of heaven's glory, the Lord demonstrates that for a lot of those whom he has chosen to save, he will quite literally move heaven and earth in order to save them and save them to the uttermost.

But all the miracles in creation may be, you know, when they happen perhaps more visible to the eye of flesh than the miracle of grace, although we don't tend to think of ourselves as seeing so many miracles nowadays in the creation sense and the physical sense, but when they happen they're more visible to the eye of flesh than is the miracle of grace in converting a sinner from darkness to light, from unbelief and indifference to faith and love in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 48] That is no less, indeed, is far more an overcoming of the state of nature and the natural fallenness into which mankind is born.

If nature was suspended or were turned with a party on the Red Sea on a drying up of the Jordan or the hills smoking and thundering at Sinai, you know, that may have been scary and awesome in its power, but turning one sinner from death to life, from indifference and hardness of heart to warmth and faith and love in Christ, that is a greater upset of the natural condition of man and of the world and all the outward visible miracles of creation.

It is far more an overcoming of the state of nature and the natural fallenness of man. Each converted believer is more a miracle of mercy, more a triumph of grace over nature, more a work of the direct intervention and personal involvement of the almighty than all the wonders of nature and miracle walked in the days of the exodus.

For surely that he should choose to do it long ago and far away for a chosen people recorded in the Bible, that's more readily believable.

We can believe that more readily because it's far away in time and in geography and it doesn't really touch us so yeah, we can believe it. We can believe it okay but it's harder perhaps to believe it's more readily believed it was long ago and far away and accepted by us that way than that he should intervene here now in the 21st century to do it for us here and where we are now in the present day for little you personally for me unbelievable and yet undeniable that it has happened.

[24 : 50] It's happened to people we know in our communities and perhaps in our extended families and perhaps to ourselves. It has happened to people we know. It has happened in this 21st century.

It has happened in our communities. It is perhaps unbelievable in the enormity of what it involves but it is undeniable for it is proven to be true again and again and again.

If it is not yet so for you then you may know of a surety that the Lord is able still now today to do above and beyond all that we can ask to think above and beyond all that he may have done in creation and in the miracles of the Exodus so long ago and if it has been done for you a convert to his love and salvation that perhaps some years ago and maybe the romance of his love seems to have faded a little and the spark grown down then what is the solution?

It is this again to remember as Israel is encouraged and admonished to do here to remember when Israel went out of Egypt the house of Jacob from a people of strange language Judah was his sanctuary Israel his dominion the sea sawed and fled Jordan was driven back and so on remember what happened remember how the Lord intervened remember indeed the great deliverance by which you were first saved the great cost to your Saviour the great love and breath and blood expended on your behalf to secure your salvation remember also that the mighty miracles of the Exodus did not continue forever once the Israelites have crossed the Jordan and they have bread in Canaan they no longer need manna once they have the water of the Jordan and of the rivers that flow down the hillsides of the promised land they no longer physically need the water from the rock they have what they need now in their inheritance

God has supplied God has supplied it by a more regular albeit less spectacular means and as it is with the supply of his children's physical needs in those days and now so it is with the spiritual the means employed now may be more humble and regular and less miraculous or that will be spectacular but the miracles of grace and of redemption and the ongoing feeding of God's people continue to happen but remember and believe of flesh in the unchangeable nature of his love because of the unchangeable love of his nature remember the unchangeable nature of his love because the unchangeable love of his own nature and in nature itself all creation testifies to God's love and what it is like this is what Israel is exhorted to do remember his power over nature remember his great new evidence remember in this psalm and all psalms how worthy he is to be praised in Israel in Scotland in Scalpe and in your own heart remember how worthy he is to be praised always and forever by you and by me and now now we are called upon to do it do the work of praise with remembrance of the past do it with expectation for the future do it with the certainty that the miracles of grace and conversion have not ceased and with the faith that he who has begun a good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ who is himself unchanging the same yesterday today and forever

[29 : 15] Amen