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Psalms 114 "Roots of Spiritual Power" August 12, 2018

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Psalm 114.

Psalm 114 is a part of a larger group of Psalms that begins actually in 113 and runs through 118. They are called the hallel Psalms, or the hallelujah Psalms, and they were Psalms that were sang in their entirety by the children of Israel as they headed up to Jerusalem for three of those long week-long kind of celebrations of God's power. So on Passover, on Pentecost, and on Tabernacles, they were three week-long celebrations each year that really focused on the power of God. In fact, those, for the most part, celebrations were designed to draw people's attention to how God's power fell upon their lives, being God's people.

This Psalm in particular, only six verses -- and I know you're thinking oh, good, six verses. We're getting out of here early. Nope, I'm going long. Really long. I'm staying, like, till -- well, longer than you. This Psalm is about the deliverance that God brought the people out of Egypt, and it is a Psalm that is sung obviously at the time of the Passover. It has great emphasis. The Jews viewed the exodus from Egypt as the single greatest act of God in their history, and so it is referenced more than anything else in the Old Testament. It is as we look to the Cross, our essential act of redemption, that Jesus gave His life for us is what we focus on as well. And the spiritual analogy is pretty simple, even from the Old Testament: God brought His people out of the bondage of Egypt. It represented the world and a power that held you that you couldn't get loose from yourself, that He needed to deliver you from, and wanted to take you to Canaan. But Canaan is not heaven. I don't care what the song says. There are no enemies to fight in heaven. There were plenty to fight in Canaan land. But it is a place where the children of Israel could walk in the Spirit, and have the Lord be the Lord of their lives. No longer Pharaoh over them as a taskmaster, but God has been their king, leading them and guiding them in the ways of life.

So all of these songs that you find here sing of God's power. And I wanted to spend a couple of minutes with you this morning

looking at three things that the Bible says not just here, but in other places, will enable you to have God's power in your life. And it's available, but you have to be in a place where God can actually pour out His power upon you. So I want to point those out to you, as well the consequences that these six verses hold, beginning with the word "separation."

Verse 1 says this: "When Israel went out of Egypt." If there is one single attribute of your life that God is interested in, in terms of empowering you, it is your call to be separate for Him. Long before Israel would learn God's power at the Red Sea, long before they would be in the wilderness looking to heaven for food or to a rock for water, the children of Israel learned that there was a distinction between them and the world, with the Egyptian, if you will. They were God's people. When Moses showed up and their plagues fell over those nine months or so, one of the plagues was this; three days of absolute darkness throughout the land. It was so bad that it is described in Exodus as a time, I think Chapter 10, where the Egyptians couldn't see their hand in front of their face. No one got up and moved. It was so dark, you could feel it, except if you went over there where the Jews were living. They had light in their dwellings. God made a distinction between His people and those who were, if you will, living in the world. This exodus from Egypt is unique.

There is another exodus that you'll find in the Bible where God had given the children over to the captivity of the Babylonians. For 70 years they went there out of the judgment. They had been idolaters and disobedient. God had warned about it for a long time. He also brought them back from that. But the Exodus in Egypt, far different than the one in Babylon, and I think there's a lesson in there. Because when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they all came out. It was a total deliverance, if you will. In Babylon, only a few people came out. In Egypt you got to leave slavery behind. To follow the Lord out of Babylon you had to leave prosperity behind, and few chose to do so. In Egypt there was a king who violently opposed your leaving, decided he could come after you and try to stop you if he could, and God stood between his anger and His people. In Babylon there was a king that would graciously offer to make a way, fund, if you will, the return of the people home. In Babylon's deliverance only 50,000 people went back. There were millions of people in captivity, but only 50,000 went back, because it is easier for God to move in His power amongst those that are poor in spirit, that are enslaved and see their

need for Him, that are suffering the consequences, than to find Him moving powerfully in the hearts of those who see themselves as successful and in need of nothing, and comfortable in the world, even though they are living in the enemy's stronghold as Babylon was. So though they are both examples of God's power, there is always the drawing of your attention to God's power in the deliverance of His people from Egypt. It is that one that speaks about the salvation that God will bring to you.

When the Lord came and spoke to Moses, He said to him, "I want you to tell the children of Israel I AM the Lord. I AM the One that will bring you out from under the bondage of the Egyptians. I will rescue you in your bondage and redeem you with an outstretched arm from the great judgments. You're going to be My people. I AM going to be your God. You're going to know I AM the Lord because I brought you out of that burdensome place of the Egyptians." Even Daniel, who was part of that Babylonian captivity, when he began to pray in captivity, said to the Lord in Daniel 9, "O, Lord, You're the One who brought us out of the Egypt. Do that again. Deliver us from this place." So separation is vital, that you see yourself this morning as a separate people unto God. Unlike the world in which you find yourself, God has called you to Himself and He wants that relationship with you.

Notice it says in verse 1 that the children of Jacob or the house of Jacob was called from a people of strange language. And it says the same thing. The word "strange language" is only one word in Hebrew, and it means nondistinctive, or stammering. The implication is, God's people for a time in Egypt were living amongst a people whose language they didn't understand, which was foreign to them. When God spoke to the children of Israel, I suspect He spoke in Hebrew. That's what they knew. And so even when Joseph there in Chapter 42, I think, of Genesis, as his brothers stood before him and they were afraid that they were found out, Joseph turned and spoke Egyptian to those he was overseeing and it says that his brothers didn't understand them, so he spoke to them through an interpreter, but once he made himself known, he spoke to them in a language that they could understand. The implication is pretty simple. God brought them out of a place that the language spoken was not His language, not the kind of language that His people spoke. It was more than just foreign tongues. It was an emphasis upon the foreign ways of life.

You and I as God's people separate from the world, we're not

supposed to be dwelling too much in the world's opinions or speaking the world's tongue, if you will. We want to hear what God has to say. We want to speak His language. And it is an important point that the world has a language all of its own, but so do you, if you belong to Him. The world doesn't have any ability, natural ability anyway, to communicate with God, to discover God, to hear His voice. The world can be genius in intellectual pursuits, but they can't speak the language of God's spirit. That God gives to you.

The hour is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and they will live. My sheep hear My voice. I speak to them, they respond. And so the Lord paints this picture of His people coming out of captivity from a place where there was a language that doesn't -- and was foreign to them, wasn't helpful to them. It's the word of God that we need, not the word of the world.

It's the one book, by the way, the world doesn't want. I'm sure you're aware of the Irvine Company decision this week to pull the Harvest ads from the Spectrum and from Fashion Island, both of which they own, and they did so because they received a credible threat against their company. So it might have been in vogue at one time to identify yourself with God's word, but it isn't any longer. And it's going to become difficult rather than easy. We had our baptism yesterday. I had a lot of people get baptized, had several folks get saved. A lady actually got saved and got baptized on the spot. I don't think she was planning on it, but the Lord spoke to her heart and it was just a glorious thing to see. But we talked to the people there about identification. You know, baptism's all about identifying with the Lord. It's like the T-shirt you put on that says "I belong to Jesus." And that used to be -- in the 60s when I got saved, it was in vogue to hang out with Jesus. The Jesus movement was the most popular movement amongst kids around. Not so popular anymore. And yet you can't compromise, because we hear His voice. We don't listen to the voice of those around us. You can go to college and read Voltaire, you can read Marx; just don't try to put a Bible picture up in a marketplace. And that's the world that we live in.

So power comes as God's people listen to Him rather than the strange language of the world, and separate themselves from the world around them. It's the first step. You come out of the world, and you come towards the Lord. It's separated from, and separated for. Not the stammering, not the

nondistinctive language of the world in which we live, but the words that lead to life. And the Lord marks that out for them. Here's a people who God brought out of Egypt, away from a language they didn't understand.

Second of all, verse 2 says that Judah then became His sanctuary. If the first word is separate, the second word is sanctification. Judah became a sanctuary. The sanctuary in the Old Testament was this sacred enclosure where the presence of God was found, where the people of God were invited to come and meet with Him in His presence. Now, there were lots of rules to govern that meeting, because man was sinful and God is holy, and so all of that procedure was meant to point you to Jesus, who would come and be the blood that would be shed for you to be able to come close to God, but in every word the sanctuary was that place where God's presence was enclosed.

In the book of Hebrews God speaks of Esau and He calls him a profane person. And the word "profane" by definition means no enclosure, or public space. Esau was a profane man because there was no room at this inn in his heart. There was no place for God to dwell. There was no -- there's no place where He could come and be a part, so profane came to be distinguished as something that was not holy, that was commonplace or publicly downtrodden. If you wanted to come into the presence of God, you had to hike up the hills of Judah and find that place at the temple where God made His presence known and that Shekinah glory of God sat between the cherubim there at the ark there. This was to be His sanctuary upon the earth for a time. This is where the people could gather. It's why worship in the Old Testament could only be had, or sacrifices, in one place, where God was. It would look forward to the Lord one day coming to live in every heart that believed in Him, where we became His temples, that we become sanctified. It's a place where He comes to dwell and make Himself at home.

Sanctification is almost the other side of separation. Separation removes you from the world. Sanctification reserves you solely for God's use. So you're not in the -- you're in the world, but you're not of it, but you are fully available to Him to do His work. God will not give His power to someone who carnally wants to use it for his own selfish ways. It is this area of just, "God, You use me the way You see fit" that you find His power. So Israel comes out of Egypt separated from a language it doesn't understand, and Judah becomes His place of residency.

And thirdly, verse 2, Israel becomes His dominion. Ultimately, the nation had to surrender itself to God's care. Separation, sanctification, and surrender. Dominion is a place of dominance; right? Israel became, as they came out of Egypt, a sphere of God's rule; the place where He would have His way. Like I said, God doesn't give His power to people that want to independently use it for his own desire. God's power comes as His will is sought by His people. You surrender to Him and you find life with Him.

Now, you can follow that thought through. In the history of Israel, the children of Israel came out and they finally came to Jericho, which was huge and high-walled and well-guarded. And they were a nomadic people that had not learned fighting much, and they had seen some deliverance from God in the last year and a half or so of the kings of the east, but other than that, they had no experience whatsoever. And yet in obedience to the Lord they found His power upon their lives. The walls fell down, the people gave up, their -- no life was lost. It was just that surrender, and God gave them victory because they could stand in His power. The very next battle they fought was a little town called Ai. It didn't have a wall. Didn't have many people. And the people quickly forgot that power comes from surrender, and so they say to Joshua, "Look, you don't need to send the whole army, man. These are just a couple of guys. Just send an elite unit of guys and we'll go take care of business." And Joshua went, "Well, that's great. We can use the rest. We had to walk into Jericho. We're really tired." And they went to fight without God's power, and they were just brutally beaten and their lives were lost, and the people were discouraged. And on paper it looked like it should have been a cakewalk and it wasn't. Because they had turned from surrender, and not surrendering, they found themselves powerless. What happened when the children of Israel came out of Egypt? They were separated, they were set apart, and they became a place where the Lord could rule.

There's a misquoted verse I hear people sometimes quoting out of James, and they usually say this: Well, just resist the devil and he will flee from you. And that's true, but it isn't the verse. They leave out the most important part of that verse in James. It starts with the words "submit yourself to God," period. Then resist the devil and he'll flee. In other words, it is the surrender first, and then the power of God upon your life to stand against the enemy to where he has no place in your life. There has to be a

surrendering before we can experience the power of God in our life. The secret of power of the enemy is surrender. Had Adam and Eve surrendered to the Lord rather than to the challenge of Satan, which was basically to question God's power, they might have stayed in the garden, but it was his encouragement to defy the Lord. It was the same tactic he took with Jesus when He was tempted in the wilderness. It's the same tactic he'll take with you. Don't surrender, defy. And if you defy, here's the problem: You lose His power; the power to be victorious in this life. If you surrender, He becomes your dominion. He becomes your ruler. If you don't, you go down to defeat.

Well, the results of that work of surrendering and sanctification and separation is found in the verses that follow, because we read in verse 3, "The sea saw it and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Seas flee, rivers part, mountains shake. When we are filled with God's power, we are invincible. In fact, you could write across verses 3 and 4, when we have God's power, obstacles in our lives are removed. The first obstacle that you find the children of Israel facing once they got out of Egypt was this issue of the Red Sea. They were headed for the glory of God's Promised Land, of a life filled with the spirit, being led by God's care, but in order to fully get away from Egypt, they were going to have to get through this obstacle. They couldn't go any further, they couldn't overcome any more, until this obstacle that stood in the way would have to be removed. And it was greater than they could handle and the enemy knew it.

There is always in your life and mine obstacles to our spiritual progress, things that stand between us and the victory that God has. And we have to be able to distance ourselves from the bondage of the world and the obstacles that we run into as we get away from the world and get closer to the Lord. They change for every one of us. Everybody's got their Red Sea experience. But they're all imposing kind of structures and hindrances that stand in the way, and if God doesn't deliver us, we aren't delivered. But here's the problem: Look at the children of Israel. Until the Red Sea issue was resolved, the children of Israel, all 3 million of them, lived way too close to the world. They had just come out a couple of days. The enemy was still way too close to them from behind. The danger of being pulled back into Egypt was real. It wasn't until God, by His power, got them through the obstacle that they could look back and say now what was an obstacle in the way now becomes a water of protection from

having us go back. Now it separated me from that place from which I've come. Obstacles to further progress, until we have God's power.

Notice in verse 3 it says that the sea saw "it," and you want to say to yourself, what did the sea see? Did the sea see Joshua threatening to send a bunch of big guys if they didn't get out of the way? Or a bunch of guys with paddles and a boat? No. Or Aaron praying and stretching his hands out by faith? No. What they saw, the sea saw, was a people who were willing to obey God. Moses took a rod, he held it out as if somehow that was magically going to help, but they believed that if God said do it, they did it. And so he stretched out the rod and God moved. In reality, the word "it" in verse 3 refers to Israel in verse 2, who has now been made God's dominion, who has now been made God's sanctuary, who have now come out of Egypt and are looking to God to get them to the Land of Promise. In other words, it is the power of God on the life of the believer who has done those things that now the trials that we face will be overcome with the power of God in our life.

We read in verse 3, the second portion, "The Jordan rolled back." It is a jump ahead historically 40 years to the time where the second generation is now ready to go into the land, and now they face another obstacle to entering into God's rest. This time it isn't, if you will, the Red Sea. It's the Jordan River. They arrive at flood season. The Bible tells us it was overflowing its banks. There was no way to get 3 million people across a raging river. There's no, you know, bridge to use. They were stuck. And yet over there was the Land of Promise. And so again, they were in a position where God's power was needed. The priests were directed by Joshua by God's spirit to take the ark, the presence of God, upon their shoulders, and to go stand in this raging river. Didn't seem like that would be much of a solution. We're going to lose some priests, and maybe the ark, but they did as they were told. They stood fast, and as their feet hit the water, the waters began to recede. And not downstream, upstream; and not one mile, but 16 miles. Rolling itself back, dry now as a bone from overflowing. Everyone on both sides of the river obviously had a lesson that the Hebrews are here. And it will be mentioned in the years to come. It became a witness to them, and God by His power rolls the river back and we read, "and the Jordan rolled back." When did it roll back? When Israel found power with God. Set apart, sanctified, letting -- ready to let God work. They became invincible.

What a lesson. Obstacles are removed. But also, opportunities are then revealed to you. God would bless them in their endeavors. And if you read again their experience with God, when they looked to Him and His power was evident, they had victory. The mountains, those big things that stand in the way, or the hills, those little irritants, they both end up skipping like rams. That's what we read. God's their sanctuary, He's their dominion. Nothing's impossible to them. In fact, the word "skip" means to dance or to jump. The implication is, when the enemy strikes to stand in your way, when God is your strength, they have to jump out of the way, and they'll remove themselves from hindering your walk with Him.

In fact, not only are we invincible, we are not vulnerable. Notice in verse 4 and 5, it asks the question of the sea and of the river and of the mountains and of the hills, the questions are the same. This time the question is for nature, what happened here? Why do you roll back? Why do you part? Why do you skip out of the way? And the answer is, this is an unnatural occurrence. This doesn't happen naturally. Only answer is God alone can make these things take place, and they will alone take place in the life of those whose power is His. When God's power is yours, then you can find that deliverance, but the moment you become proud and you see yourself as the cause of the blessings and imagining your zeal or your faith, "Oh, I've been praying," you lose all power. But the result of God's power in your life is invincibility and no vulnerability. You're going to be able to stand. Nothing's going to hold you back.

And there's something else that's added at the end, people will begin to take notice. It says in verse 7, "Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, Who turned the rock into a pool of water, and the flint into a fountain of waters." Notice in verse 7 the call to the earth is, in the presence of God's people empowered by Him, tremble, but the power of the Lord or the presence of the Lord is now found in His people. In fact, He's called the God of Jacob, which is a great title, because whenever you read in the Old Testament the God of Jacob, it is a reference to Jacob in his weak state. His name "Israel" speaks of his spiritual strength. But this is a man who was weak and didn't deserve to have His strength.

Even in the weakest of us, God's power will be a great witness to the world around us. It will bring trembling into the

lives of people who watch us. There'll be real power to be a witness. You'll be a real example and a testimony to others, as God continues to do in you what He did in the lives of His people, bringing water of the rock; if you will, turning our hardened hearts into a place that is soft, drinking the water of life and making us softhearted. That's how evangelism works: God's power in your life seen in you by the world causes them to tremble. What do you have and how can I get it? I want what you've been given. Paul when he wrote his first letter to his disciple Timothy said to him, "Timothy, make sure that you meditate on these things and give yourself entirely to them, so that your progress can be evident to all. Take heed to yourself. Take heed to the doctrines in which you believe. Continue in them. In so doing you'll both save yourself and those who hear you."

So the children of Israel, who were called by God to be His people, who were destined at least in God's will to be a light to the world that would bear forth the Messiah, only found their strength in Him when they came out. Separated, set apart, and committed to Him to surrender in His life. That was the dedication.

That's what it's going to take for you and I. You want to see God at work in a mighty way, then separate yourself for Him, and come out from the world, and let Him be the Lord, and surrender yourself to His leadership. As you do, the obstacles in your path to get closer to the Lord will be removed and the opportunities that you have to be used by Him will be revealed to you, and those who watch you will be convicted and converted. Lives will be touched. Things will happen as you walk with God.

It's a pretty powerful six verses, isn't it? But it all comes back to those three S's: Separate, sanctify, surrender.