

February 1

In **THE ONE YEAR BIBLE** Old Testament reading for today (Exodus 13:17-15:18) we read of God directing Israel to the place where they were trapped between the sea and the pursuing army of Egypt. The army chased after the Hebrews after the Pharaoh had a change of heart. God put Israel in a place where there was no way out other than by His gracious and strong hand. He parted the sea, took them through, and then drowned Pharaoh's troops. Chapter 14 ends with these words, "Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses." In 15:1-18 we read of a song Moses and the people of Israel sang in praise of God's great salvation.

The key lesson we learn from this text is that God sometimes ordains that we end up in very difficult situations which leave us feeling abandoned by Him, yet, He puts us there to see His power in a way we could not without the set of circumstances. We must learn to trust Him and not grumble, as did the Hebrews.

Though we don't know for sure the situation behind today's psalm (26), David was facing an enemy who had brought accusations against him. He asked the LORD to vindicate him (v. 1) and based his request upon his faithfulness to God (vv. 2ff.). This desire for vindication and justice is a recurring theme in the Scriptures (Rev. 6:10) which culminates in the promise that God will vindicate His people and show to the world their true identity (Rom. 2:29; 1 John 3:1-3). This desire also stands behind the requests we see throughout the Psalms for God to deal with those who are enemies of God and God's people. Along this same line, believers today should focus upon our desire for people to be justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, as well as our confidence God will make all things right someday (Rom. 12:19).

Proverbs 6:16-19 not only remind us how important it is we pursue holiness, but we do so not only in behavior, but also in heart (or attitude).

In Matthew 21:23-46 we see opposition to Jesus increasing. On Tuesday of the week Jesus was crucified He was in the temple court and His authority was challenged by the chief priests and elders (23-27). After this interplay Jesus told a parable of two sons (28-32) to contrast Jewish leaders (who claim they obey God but don't) with those who have been disobedient, yet truly come to believe in and obey God. His point (and the one we must grasp) is that we must truly trust the LORD in our heart and obey Him, rather than merely give Him lip service. Another parable (of the tenants, vv. 33-45) told the story of hard-hearted Israelites who have rejected prophets and now Jesus. As a result, they will lose out on the kingdom and it will be given to people who truly believe, repent, and produce fruits of repentance. This parable not only chastised these leaders for their unbelief, it challenges us with the importance of exercising true faith in Jesus Christ, and it explains the shift in the history of redemption from an almost sole focus upon Israel to a focus upon the nations as the gospel goes to those who were not the people of God, yet have now become His people (see 1 Peter 2:10).