

# The Life of Moses Part 20: God Provides Israel a Way of Escape

*The Life of Moses*

By Bart Carlson

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## **Trinity Baptist Church**

160 Changebridge Road  
Montville, NJ 07045

**Website:** [www.trinitymontville.org](http://www.trinitymontville.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tbcnj](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tbcnj)

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While I will be making reference to the last few verses of chapter 13—and certainly that, in one sense, is the beginning of this particular section—I just want to read this chapter in your hearing before we come expound it this morning.

Exodus chapter 14 beginning at verse one.

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

And as Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD.

Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. And as for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. And as for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen."

And the angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. And the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. And it came about at the morning watch, that the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. And He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen."

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. And when Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.<sup>1</sup>

Well, let us once again seek God's face for his help as we come to his Word this morning. Let us pray.

*Father in heaven, we plead with you that you would work in us in such a way that all self confidence, all self sufficiency would be blown away and we would see ourselves for what we really are, weak and sinful creatures that we might honestly and earnestly seek from your hand all the grace we need to be able to stand, to be able to understand. We plead with you. Be merciful to us and come and speak to us. Teach us from your holy Word. Thank you for this Bible. Thank you for the privilege of joining together to study it. Please, use it for our good and for your glory we plead in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We have been watching, as it were, the Israelites as they have gone from the state of suffering and oppression and bondage, enslaved in Egypt. We have seen how God brought to them this man Moses to be the instrument, to be the agent in his hand in God's hand to bring them out from underneath that bondage. And we have seen now how God has brought these 10 plagues and at last the most terrible of plagues in particular where the first born in Egypt and every house died. And God delivered his people. He redeemed his people from suffering under his presence among the Egyptians by their killing of the Passover Lamb and sprinkling the blood on the doorposts and on the lintel. We have seen how the Egyptians then told the Israelites to feel from them. They basically drove them out of their country. Moses led this mighty host.

We saw the last time that there was, as it were, almost a hiatus, almost a stop, a pause as they stopped to consider the fact that the firstborn were set apart unto God. God highlighted for us or we highlighted as we looked at chapter 13 how the consequences of being redeemed were that they were a sanctified people, a people set apart unto God and

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 14:1-31.

they were a people who were to be constantly remembering, a people who were to be thinking upon what God had done for them, a life reoriented around this great reality of redemption.

And then we saw, thirdly, that the third consequence or result of that redemption was that God was with them leading them and we saw that in verses 17 to 32.

As we come to chapter 14 that theme that was highlighted at the end of chapter 13 is going to be expanded and it is going to be further explained as we look at how God leads Israel out having redeemed them, in one sense having already brought them out from Egypt, but that is not yet complete. They are not yet free fully from the danger of the Egyptians.

And so we saw last week in chapter 13 verses 17 to 22 how God leads his people. God avoids the shortcut through the land where the Philistines were. God leads his people around, it says, through the wilderness as they start down toward the Red Sea. And then those words in verses 21 and 22 which were meant to set the stage, to encourage the people. They are not out on their own. They are not cut loose like a boat left to float downstream, left to float out in the ocean. The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light that they might travel by day and by night. God was the one who would determine where they would go, when they would go. God would go before them to direct them all throughout their journey. God leads his people.

But now we come to chapter 14 and we note, first of all, in verses one to four, God leads in a confusing way. I had original heading was this. God leads in a confusing way his wonders to perform. And those of you who know our hymns well will know where the hymn I am referring to.

But the fact of the matter here, God is going to lead them in a very unpredictable way. In verses one and two note with me that God gives clear directions. It is not as though God is unclear in telling them what they need to know. He gives them very clear directions. God tells Moses that Israel is to turn back and retrace their steps. They have made their way down south to a point along the Red Sea.

And God says, "Now, wait. I want you to backtrack. I want you to take some steps back and I want you to camp with your backs to the Sea. And I want you to camp with Migdol on one side and Baal-zephon on the other."

Migdol was very likely one of the places where Egypt had set up an outpost. As one man said, "A network of Egyptian outposts lined the eastern border of Egypt during the New Kingdom and any one of these could possibly have been named Migdol."

On the other side was what appeared to be a very tall or a very hard to climb rocky surface. See behind them a place of fortification to the side of them and on the other side

a rock surface. There they are in the wilderness. They were on the brink of being set free. They were at the edge of the wilderness. They were ready to go.

And God said, “No, no. I want you to go back and I want you to camp here.”

He gives very clear directions.

And God reveals in verses three and four the certain consequences. Remember he is speaking to Moses in these verses. “The LORD spoke to Moses...”<sup>2</sup> And he told him, “Here is where I want the people to go and here are the certain consequences of those actions.”

Pharaoh is going to look at you and say you are aimless. Pharaoh is going to look at the people of Israel and say, “They are wandering. They are lost.” And Pharaoh is going to look at your camp sight and he is going to say you are trapped. The wilderness has shut them in. Pharaoh is going to look at this circumstance where I am leading you and is going to say, “They are helpless. They are like trapped rats with no way of defending themselves and no way out.”

And this is going to encourage him to attack quickly.

But we read in verse four how God then explains the ultimate goal of this action. He says, “I am doing this, in essence, though I am going to harden Pharaoh’s heart and he will chase after Israel, I will be honored. I will be glorified. I will be treated as heavy, as weighty though through Pharaoh and his army and the Egyptians and they will know that I am the Lord. Here is my ultimate purpose. I want glory to myself and I want them to know me for the God that I am.”

Now stop and think about that for just a moment. How does an army get glory? By defeating their enemy. If God is fighting on their behalf of the Egyptians and he is the one who has trapped us here, is God now going to get glory by destroying us? Is this where we are left? Is this what we have come out of Egypt for?

God says, “I am going to get glory, Moses, to myself. And they will know me.”

And it says at the end of verse four, “They did so.”<sup>3</sup> They obeyed, backtracked, retraced their steps, found themselves in a trap. God leads in a confusing, though not in an unclear way because he has given them very clear directions.

Third, or second... because the first point was God leads his people. That is the end of chapter 13. Second, God leads in a confusing way. And then, third, or second if you weren’t counting that first point, Pharaoh acts in a predictable way.

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 14:1.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 14:4.

Pharaoh and his servants change their minds again. Now he has in previous times after certain of the plagues said, “Ok, go. Take these parts of your people and go out and sacrifice. Ok, well you can sacrifice all of you as long as you stay in the land. Oh, no, no, no. I don’t like that idea. Go back to work.”

Well, he does it again. He changes his mind. And it is very predictable because, you know, we all like comfort and we all like profitability. And as a leader, to give up free workers is to affect one’s economic profitability and is to affect one’s comfort.

I have gotten rid of my slaves. Well, who is going to do this work? The Egyptians? Are we going to do this?

So he changes his mind having driven them out and as soon as he is aware of the fact that they have left, he is very upset at himself that they have gone.

One commentator put it this way. “Pharaoh promptly regretted his decision to dismiss his slaves and wanted them back. The contest was a matter of ownership.”

Still back to that same issue. Who owns these people? Who has the right to claim ownership over the Israelites? Pharaoh as his slaves or God as his first born?

So we read of Pharaoh chasing after them. He says it several times.

Verse eight. “He chased after the sons of Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

Verse nine. “The Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army.”<sup>5</sup>

Pharaoh changes his mind again. And Pharaoh acts on the basis of perceived power. Pharaoh really thinks he has got the power to accomplish all that he wants to do. He thinks, I have got chariots. I have got horsemen.

So he jumps in his chariot. He calls his select chariots together, those parts of his war machine that were designed to move at high speeds. He is going to chase these people down. He gets his Cavalry together to go after them. He finds they are in a trap and he is going to get them before they escape.

Now this word “chase” can actually be translated “persecute,” pursue to the point of persecuting them. He is not going out after them just to round up the cattle. Right? This is not the cattle have gotten out of the corral and we have got to go round them up and get them back here. He is going to make them pay. He is going to track them down. He is going to persecute them. He is going to bring them back and they are going to be slaves like they have never been before.

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 14:8.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 14:9.

But he is convinced he can do this. You see that? He is absolutely convinced he can do this.

Now, now in the world has he gotten that thought? He has just buried his first born son. All of Egypt has just buried all of the first born. They have just about been devastated economically, financially. They have had locusts and they have had flies and they have had hail and they have had dark. They have been utterly decimated. And yet it is like all that goes away as soon as he feels the pinch in his wallet. He doesn't want to have to lose his slaves. And so all of that is gone and he perceives, I can accomplish this in my own power.

But as we look at this Pharaoh acting in his predictable way, I want you to note the hint that the passage gives us of where real power lies. Where is the real power in this passage? In verse 4a it says this.

“I will harden Pharaoh's heart.”<sup>6</sup>

And verse eight.

“And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh.”<sup>7</sup>

And then there is this little phrase.

“...king of Egypt.”<sup>8</sup>

Who is in charge? It is not the king. God says, “This is exactly what I want to do to accomplish my glory. I am going to act in a way to actively judge Pharaoh for his sinful determination to stand against me. He wants to fight me. I will help him fight me. I will set him up to fight me.” He hardens his heart.

God is not absent in this. Pharaoh doesn't have the power. God is behind it all. And it is all done, I think, for this one note. And if I can get any one phrase in our minds, I hope it is this. Never confuse the wilderness with Canaan.

Just because they were out of slavery doesn't mean now it is freedom and now they have all the blessings that they could ever have, now they are where they ought to be. They are only now just beginning their journey. They haven't gotten to the Promised Land yet. They aren't in the place of abundance yet. This is the wilderness.

Now, yes, God is leading them, but this is the wilderness. God leads his people. God leads them in a confusing way sometimes. Pharaoh, on the other hand, acts in a very predictable way and then in verse 10 to 14 Israel reacts in a very typical way. Israel reacts in a very typical way.

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 14:4.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 14:8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Now, imagine. Here you are. Here you are out in the wilderness. You have made your way out and you think you are free and then God says, “Ok, go back. And you camp and you have got... behind you you have got the sea. And it says they lifted up their eyes, literally. Somebody was sitting there and they were maybe working in the house. Maybe the woman was sweeping away. One of the men was cleaning up outside the tent and they look up off in the distance and what do they see? Dust being kicked up by chariots and horsemen bearing down upon them and they knew exactly what it was.

They saw, it says in verse 10.

“[They] looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them.”<sup>9</sup>

They saw the Egyptians were coming. It couldn't get much worse. We can't go to the right. We can't go the left. We can't go back and now they are coming. I thought we were free from them.

And so what do they? They panicked. That is what they do. They panic. They become very frightened. Great fear comes upon them.

And it says, “Israel cried.” They cried with a loud voice.

Now we have to stop for a minute and ask what is this cry. Now the word generally means to make a strong appeal. It often means to make a strong appeal in the face of injustice. But now if this is them praying to God for help, then why do we have verse 15?

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying out to Me?’”<sup>10</sup>

Of course we are crying to you. Who else are we going to cry to? You are God. You are the one who is delivering us, right? Shouldn't we cry to you?

Now the commentators make a specific point and they say, “Well, what this is teaching us is there is a time for prayer and there is a time for action.” Well, it certainly wasn't a time for action, because there is nowhere for them to go. As they will take their brooms and their hoes and whatever they brought them and go attack the army.

No, the word “cried out” can mean to cry out as an expression of anxiety.

In Genesis chapter 27 and verse 34 maybe you remember the incident. Esau comes into his father and he wants a blessing. But his father tells him, “The blessing is gone. I gave it to your brother.”

And Esau really wants this blessing and it says in Genesis 27 and verse 34:

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<sup>9</sup> Exodus 14:10.

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 14:15.



“When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father!’”<sup>11</sup>

It says he sought it with many tears. But there was no blessing. There was nothing for him to receive at that point from his father.

The word is used as well to describe those who have been plundered by war. In 1 Samuel four and verse 14 Eli hears the noise after the Philistines have defeated the Israelite army and they have taken the ark captive and he hears the outcry, same word. He hears how the people are crying out in the midst of their defeat.

Jeremiah uses the term in a similar way.

Well, you know, I have put all these things together and as far as I can tell this outcry, whatever it was that it was reaching up to God, I believe it had a very strong tinge of sinful carnality. It was marked by unbelief and fear.

I almost read the words where God says to Moses, “Stop, why are you crying out to me?” as, “Why are you whining?”

They were fearful and they began to whine. Oh, Lord, why? Why? I don’t think this was a cry of real desire for God to act. As a matter of fact Keil and Delitsch, one of the Hebrew commentaries, Hebrew scholar commentaries said this about this incident.

“Although they cried unto the Lord, they had no confidence of his help. Notwithstanding all the previous manifestations of the fidelity of the true God, they therefore gave vent to despair of their natural heart.”

And it is joined to the fact that they immediately, then, do something else very typical. Not only do they panic, but we read in verses 11 and 12, they complain.

Oh, this has become so typical of Israel, so typical in the face of difficulty to complain. They see the only possibility as death. There is only one way out. We are all going to die. We are all going to die. That is what they say to Moses.

Notice how they speak to Moses in verse 11.

“Then they said to Moses, ‘Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?’”<sup>12</sup>

In fact, Egypt was a nation that was consumed or obsessed with death. They had whole cities of death, whole cities where they buried their dead. Remember how they built the tombs to the kings? It wasn’t like they did it off in some little corner somewhere.

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<sup>11</sup> Genesis 27:34.

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 14:11.

Eventually they built huge pyramids as tombs to the kings. There was plenty of place to die in Egypt.

This is a very sarcastic, very whiny kind of response. They are complaining and grumbling. Why have you done this? Why did you bring us out here?

And so they are very much feeling the only way out is death. And so they blame the only person they can blame, Moses.

Moses, this is your fault. You did this Moses.

They make it sound like they were the wise ones.

Moses, didn't we tell you back there it would have been better to stay there and be slaves than to be out here and be facing death? Didn't we tell you that this pilgrimage was a difficult thing?

They were already speaking of how living in Egypt was far better than following God. As a matter of fact, these words are treasonous. They are treating God's servant, God's appointed spokesman and leader as though he were the traitor when, in fact, they were.

So they respond in a very typical way.

But before I come out from this head of their response, I want to put under this same heading, Moses' response. This is really a conversation. Moses responds in faith. It is an amazing response that Moses has. Notice what Moses says to these complaints.

“Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.’”<sup>13</sup>

That is amazing. We have no indication that Moses received at this point in time any additional revelation. It is not as though God said, “Ok, I hear them grumbling. Moses, let me tell you how to respond to them.” Moses responds in faith. He believes all that he has heard up to this point of how God is going to deliver them from the Egyptians. He believes what God has told them from the past that they would be a people who for 400 years would be in Egypt and then they were to turn to the land. That is why he went back and got the bones of Joseph. He was going to take them to the Promised Land. He was convinced he was headed to the Promised Land.

And so how does he deal with these Israelites? He gives them a robust or a strong rebuke. He gives them an emphatic exhortation and that he is going to give them a powerful encouragement.

A robust rebuke. He says to them, “Do not fear!”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Exodus 14:13.

Moses identifies their problem. They were afraid. But he does more than that. He rebukes them for their fear. He doesn't say, "I understand. You know, these are difficult times. You know, we were almost out and now we are coming back and I understand. Hey, it is ok."

No. The Hebrew here, as one Hebrew scholar said, is emphatic. It is the most emphatic negation that can be made in Hebrew. Stop fearing. Don't do that.

And then he goes and says, "But let me give you an emphatic exhortation. I am going to double my exhortation. Because it is really the same thing, but I am going to say it in two different ways. Stand by and see. Stand by. Take a stand. Station yourself. Take your place where God has told you to stand."

The word is most frequently used to describe standing before God when you are in the presence and ready to hear from God. Over and over again it is used in that way. Stand in your place. God has called you out. He has delivered you under the blood of the Lamb. There you were to stand with God in what he... the command that he gave you. Now I am giving you the explicit command. Stand. Are you going to stand on God's side? Are you going to stand on fear's side? Are you going to stand on Pharaoh's side?

Take your stand with God and see.

You looked up and you saw dust out there, didn't you, Moses says. You looked up and you saw chariots and horsemen coming, didn't you? And you began to fear. Now stop fearing. Stand in your place and look. Don't look for destruction. Don't look for them to capture you. Look for salvation. Look for your God to act on your behalf. What faith Moses exercises. He has not lost hope in God because the circumstances are dire. Though he doesn't seem to have any knowledge of how God is going to deliver him, yet he knows that God is going to save them because God has said he would. God is going to set them free. It sounds similar to the words that later in history Mordecai would say to Esther.

"Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"<sup>15</sup>

Mordecai says, "God is going to deliver his people. God always delivers his people. I have got confidence in God that he will deliver us."

It sounds similar to the words that Jesus gave to the synagogue official, didn't it, when that synagogue official came to Jesus and asked him to heal his daughter. And while they are on the way back to the synagogue official's home this woman comes up and she is

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Esther 4:13-14.

healed by touching the hem of his garment and then Jesus addresses her and then word comes before he can start walking again that the daughter has died.

Imagine the father. He was almost there. Almost there and we had to stop. Why did he stop? Now she is dead.

He turns to the synagogue official and they say, “‘Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.’ But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, ‘Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she shall be made well.’”<sup>16</sup>

This is Moses’ command. Do you see what Moses does in this double emphasis? He says, “Trust. Trust. Stand your ground with God. Trust him right where you are and look and expect that he will come in his time in his way. Trust him. Trust him.”

We are following him. We have been obeying him. We are here because he put us here. Stand and watch what God will do. Stop being afraid. Only believe.

And to that he adds this powerful encouragement. Moses gives them these words and this is really, in a sense, almost the heart of this whole passage.

“The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”<sup>17</sup>

it is emphatic.

The Lord he himself, he will fight for you and you, you yourselves, in the meantime, you keep silent. Stop your grumbling. Stop your complaining. Keep silent in faith before God. God will fight for you.

What encouragement. What an encouragement in the midst of these difficulties. They are going to die. They see no way out. They were almost free. All the circumstances are against them. But Moses says you take your role and God will take his role. Your role is to believe. God’s role at this point is to fight. God is the power behind every victory. And right now the role of God’s people is to stand and watch what he will do. Moses is seeking to get their eyes off of Pharaoh and his army, off of the danger that is all around them and get their eyes on the God who saves. They have nothing to contribute.

As one man put it very starkly, “They are spectators. Salvation is by God’s power and by his grace alone.”

God leads in a very confusing way on this occasion. Pharaoh acts in a very predictable way. Israel reacts in a very typical way. And, finally, God saves in a magnificent way. God saves in a magnificent way in verses 15 to 31. The rest is all about how God comes and saves his people. He directs his servant Moses in verses 15 to 18 as to what he is to do. Can you imagine there they are?

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<sup>16</sup> Luke 8:49-50.

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 14:14.

Moses has just told all the people.

He says, “Stand and look for GO dot do something.” And God says, “Ok, Moses, stretch out your hand and part the sea.”

Oh, we need to read the text the way it says it.

It says, “With the staff in your hand.”

Remember what the staff was? It was God’s staff. It was the representation of God’s power. He was acting as God’s agent. He says, “Moses, you act on my behalf. You stretch out that staff. You stretch out your hand and I will part the sea.”

And Moses did it. He stretched out his hand. We read later, “And the wind began to come.”

God gives directions to Moses and then God delivers his people.

But notice how God does this. After he tells Moses what to do, after Moses has sought to encourage them and God tells Moses what to do, now there is a little pause. As we read in verses 19 and 20 how God is going to stop for a moment and make them wait.

The angel of the Lord, remember that was the one that spoke from the burning bush. That was the pre incarnate Messiah. That was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who is leading his people in this pillar of cloud and this pillar of fire. The angel of the Lord now moves behind them rather than in front of them. He is now between them and the Egyptians. And I think the best understanding of this verse 20 is that it was darkness on the side with the Egyptians and it was light on the side with Israel. And God stands there.

And it says all night.

“Thus the one did not come near the other all night.”<sup>18</sup>

Then Moses stretches out his hand and God provides a way of escape in verses 21 and 22. He opens up the Red Sea.

Now I want you to notice just a little phrase here which is, again, just an interesting little phrase. It says that the wind came from the East and it blew all night.

Now if you remember your geography they were in Egypt. If I can get this backwards here, they were in Egypt. And they are leaving Egypt and they hit the Red Sea. What side of the sea are they on? The west side. The wind comes from the east side.

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<sup>18</sup> Exodus 14:20.

So I think the picture that one of the commentators painted was an accurate picture that the sea began to divide from the east to the west. Do you know what that requires? Waiting.

What is the last thing you want to do with an army pouncing down behind you? Wait. But he says, "Wait."

He is standing between them. He parts the sea. Eventually the water stands up, one wall on one side, the one wall on the other side and the ground is perfectly dry.

All of the language, every time it says it, it is talking about bone dry ground. This wasn't mushy. God says, "Here is the way of escape." God provided it. And so they start moving out. They do what they are supposed to do. They start moving across the water.

Now I did pass over one thing in my notes that I want to highlight because they are told to do one thing, the thing that pilgrims do best. Go. Go forward.

Now at that point when he said, "Go forward," the water hadn't parted yet. So they knew what direction they were going and then God parts the water to make it plain that is the direction. They are to do what pilgrims do. They are to go forward. God will make the way of escape and he protects his people. He provides that way of escape. They get through the water to the other side. They turn around and they see the Egyptian army coming after them and they get down in the middle and we read that the water came back and swallowed them up.

Now, that is not what we read. Let's read it together because it is very, very important.

Verse 21.

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. And the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously the angel of the Lord now has moved out of the way.

"Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. And it came about at the morning watch..."<sup>20</sup>

At the time when Ra, the sun god was now making his appearance on the scene, somebody other than Ra was looking down.

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<sup>19</sup> Exodus 14:21-23.

<sup>20</sup> Exodus 14:23-24.

“The LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians ...And he caused their chariot wheels...”<sup>21</sup>

Literally it says “to fall off.” I think that is the best translation. I am not a Hebrew scholar, but as the Hebrew books that I read said, this is probably they made his wheels fall off. But they made them swerve. They got them confused. And all of the sudden they realize. They get the picture.

The Lord, The Lord, Jehovah, that Yahweh guy, remember him? Yeah, oh, no. Remember the darkness? Remember the flies? Remember the lice? Remember the...

Too late. God says, “Moses, stretch out your hand again.”

He stretches out his hand and the water comes in. God comes and brings the water over them and “the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.”<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the Lord saved Israel. There is the bottom line. The Lord saved Israel.

If I could put this whole thing in a simple parallel structure, here is what we have in this passage. Pharaoh chased Israel. Israel saw, Israel panicked and Israel complained. The Lord saved Israel. Israel saw and Israel feared and Israel believed.

How did he save them? He fought for them. How did he fight for them? He hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Hardening his heart, he attacked. The angel protected. The Lord divided and dried. They went through. The Lord saw. The Lord confused and the Lord overthrew. That is how the Lord delivered his people. And God gets all the glory. He did it to honor his name.

Now what lessons can we glean from such a passage? Well, the lesson that stands out first and foremost comes right out of those last verses and that is salvation is all of God and all of grace. It always has been. It always will be. They were spectators in that sense. They watched God save them as he had promised to do. They were to believe the promise of God. They were to commit themselves to God. In a sense, they were to commit themselves to the angel of the Lord who was the one who was leading them. They were to believe that God would set them free, that God would come in his grace. And God is the one who fought for them. God is the one who overthrew their enemies. God is the one who gets the honor and the glory because he is the one who delivered them.

Jeremiah picks up this theme. If you want to turn there, Jeremiah 32 verses 17 to 22. This theme of how God delivers and how he delivered at that time becomes a theme that he wants to press upon the people in his day.

Jeremiah 32 verses 17 to 22. Jeremiah says to God:

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<sup>21</sup> Exodus 14:24-25.

<sup>22</sup> Exodus 14:27.

“Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.”<sup>23</sup>

He looks at the God of creation, who orders all of creation and he says, “Nothing is too difficult for you.

...who shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. The LORD of hosts is His name; great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds; who has set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and even to this day both in Israel and among mankind; and You have made a name for Yourself, as at this day. ‘You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror; and gave them this land, which You swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey.’<sup>24</sup>

It wasn’t the great leadership of Moses. It wasn’t that they were a great and powerful people. God saved them. And Jeremiah says, “That is the God that we serve today.”

Lord, that is the God that you are. You have got glory to yourself by saving a people for yourself.

This is a picture to us of how God engages in saving his people. This is the salvation that then eventually will come to its fullest fruition in Jesus Christ. And Paul will describe that salvation as it came to the Ephesians and as it comes to us, a work which God does, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The glory goes all to him, to the glory of his powerful grace or his gracious power. It is God who makes his people willing to offer themselves freely in the day of his power. The people are to believe. The people are to stand and trust in the Lord. Salvation is all of God.

If God has saved you, if you sit here this morning and you are a child of God and you have been redeemed not from Egypt and slavery to Egypt, but from the bondage of sin, God gets all the glory. You get none of it for yourself. The preacher that preached it to you, the tract that was given it to you, the person who handed it to you, the person who spoke to you. The glory doesn’t go to them. It was God who saved you. It was God who drew you out. It was God who overcame the bondage. It was God in his grace and his power who called you and brought you to himself.

But then this is a picture also of pilgrimage. And this is the beginning of the pilgrimage of the redeemed. And we see in this that God’s direction is often inexplicable even when

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<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah 22:17.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 32:18-22.



we have divine direction. Even when we have explicit direction as to what we ought to do, where God takes us is often very difficult to comprehend.

Now, you know, I will grant you that I think it would have been a lot easier to follow God with a pillar in front of us that it would be to have to sit down and look at his Word and try to discern what his wisdom was and how to act and where to go. I will grant you that that was the case. But, you know, the point isn't that they had it easier than you and me. The point is that even with the cloud, even with the pillar of fire, it was all designed for them to exercise faith. They had to go where God would wanted them to go. They had to camp where God told them to camp. They had to stay where God wanted them to stay. They had to exercise faith. They had to walk by faith and not by sight just as we have to walk by faith and not by sight.

God has designed the Christian life that to follow him always requires the exercise of faith. And that is often times why he brings us onto these stages of tragedy and difficulty in our lives so that we are left to say, "I am going to have to trust you in this one. I have no clue where I am going. I have no clue how you are going to sort this one out. I have no idea how you are going to deliver me, how you are going to save me from this one."

And even the deliverances that God orchestrates are designed to strengthen and to call upon us to exercise our faith, even when we have to die, even when the way of escape is death. They are always designed for us to believe. God wants us to depend upon him and not upon ourselves. We are to be following him and not ourselves. And if the difficulties don't come, if life is nice easy rose path, then where do we need God? I can do this.

God says, "No, no, no. You can't do this. And you can't even do it in the easy rose path because it is all covered with thorns anyway. But the fact of the matter is I am going to show you. You can't do this yourself. You need me and I am here. I give myself to you. Follow me. Stay with me. Walk with me. Believe in me."

Our extremity, as one commentator said over and over, "Our extremity is God's opportunity." Here is how he put it.

"In Christ the heavenly realms are not only the place of total blessing, but also the place where we battle with rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil."

Did you hear that? The heavenly realms, Ephesians chapter one is what he is talking about. We are in the heavenlies. He says that is the place not only of total blessing, but that is the place of battle. And this element of conflict can so contradict what we expect it that we are floored not just by the severity of the pilgrim fight, but by the simple fact that life in Christ is like this at all.

Have you ever had those thoughts? I didn't know following Christ was going to be like this. I thought following Christ was supposed to be full of joy and peace and I am just doing nothing but fighting and struggling and wrestling.

That is the Christian life.

In this world you will have tribulations.

Paul could say, "I glory in my weakness, for God's power is made perfect in my weakness."

And as children of God we are made to feel our weakness. We are made to feel the inadequacies of ourselves. The challenge is difficult. The yoke seems heavy. The path is confusing.

Now think about it for a minute. Have you ever been in this kind of circumstance? You start the day off and the first thing you do in the day is you take three steps backward from where you were yesterday.

And so you are retracing your steps and then you find yourself hemmed in on one side by the difficulties of your weakness, hemmed in on the other side by temptations and all that is behind you is nothing but a sea that you can't pass through because the difficulties are just too high.

Ever found yourself pressed in on all sides?

Every parent who has more than two children knows what it is to be pressed in on all sides because you can't keep hold of all of them at once.

But you think everything is going well and then all of the sudden you are backtracking. You are taking steps in the wrong direction. You seem to be right on the edge of a breakthrough and now you are going backwards. Satan seems to be bristling. The only way out seems death.

God says, "Stand and look to me. Salvation is of the Lord. Look unto me," as Isaiah put it. Jesus or God said through Isaiah, "Look unto me and be saved all the ends of the earth."

God is present always with his people. So in the midst of those difficult circumstances he hasn't left us. No, he may have us waiting. Isn't that the worst times? But he has us waiting for a purpose. So we will rest in him. Trust in him. Look to him to guide and to direct when he gives the way of escape.

Brethren, there are no shortcuts to glory. I know that sounds trite. I know that sounds so simple, but the fact of the matter is God doesn't give us an easy short route to glory. It is through the wilderness and we are never to confuse the wilderness with Canaan. This place is to be filled with difficulty. This place is to be filled with pain. We sang in that hymn, if Jesus had to go through this, how much more we have to go through this. He

had to go into the wilderness and face the enemy. He had to suffer pain and difficulty. And therefore we do, as well.

We have our enemies of our soul. We must fight viscosly who are, excuse me, who are fighting viciously to take us captive. There is no such thing in the Bible as easy progress, victory without cost or access on earth to come to some supposed higher life where striving sacrificially against the foes of life doesn't work. We reach the point where we don't have to struggle anymore. That is not this world, not according to the Bible. Such is heaven, not earth.

But God, brethren, is always faithful as he was to the people of Israel in their extremity, he is always faithful to us to provide a way of escape. Believing in God doesn't mean we are blind. It means we are looking in a different direction. We are not looking at the troubles. We are not focused upon all the difficulties and pains. We are looking to the Savior who delivers. We are to be looking for that way of escape that he promises in his faithfulness he will provide. And until he does, stand.

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith.”<sup>25</sup>

Or the Ephesians six passage.

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, [what?] to stand firm.<sup>26</sup>

And if you didn't get it he says, “Stand firm therefore...”<sup>27</sup>

Stand firm with God, trusting in him, waiting upon him, looking unto him in the midst of the darkness.

Isn't that what we saw in Jeremiah's life in Lamentations chapter three? Waiting upon God? And watch. Watch.

Brethren, we are to fix our minds on the things which are true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and of good report and those things which are of excellence and those things worthy of praise. Our minds are to dwell on these things. We are not to be looking at the things which can be seen, but the things which can't be seen.

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Peter 5:9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Ephesians 6:10-13.

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 6:14.

Oh, how much we are like the Israelites. We find ourselves hemmed in. We find the pile getting high. And what do we do? Panic, whine and complain.

And so before you throw any stones and join the Pharaoh's army against the Israelites, you had better look a little more carefully about your own life. And when you are facing those things what do you do? Well, Moses' words come to us. Jesus' words come to us. The apostles' words come to us. Do not fear. Stand firm. Watch for your salvation. The Lord will fight for you.

Now he may not deliver you in the way that you think. He may not blow the sea with a great wind and make a nice wall of water for you to pass through. He may have you walk right down through the difficulties and the pains with the pain all around you fixing your eyes on Jesus.

All the way through the painful endurance, all the way through the painful race enduring the cross, despising the shame, follow after Jesus. God will glorify his name.

That is the ultimate goal. I don't know how all the time. I can't tell you how he is going to do it every time. But ultimately that is the goal. He will glorify his name either in your salvation to the praise of his glorious grace, or in your judgment to the praise of his glorious justice.

I close with this quote from Henry Law.

“The Holy Spirit erects a column on the shore and writes a worthy record. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. Oh, my soul, read it in prayer, in wonder and in praise. It tells the final glory of the gospel. The saved all saved, the lost all lost. Yes, the Lord will surely save his people with an everlasting salvation. No peril shall impede their triumph. No foe shall hinder. Trials and snares, afflictions and temptations shall away. They shall pass away. The graves shall not detain. Death shall yield up its prey. The true Israel shall reach the land of never fading joy with palms in their hands and crowns on their heads. They shall ascribe in ceaseless song all victory to the cross of Jesus. But in ruined Egypt mark the last doom of the ungodly world. Too late they see their madness. Too late they strive to flee. Listener, take warning. Perdition is a truth which many learn too late.”

Judgment will come. God will get glory either by humbling you to the point where you cry to him for mercy and salvation or by casting you away in his justice and bringing upon you doom to the praise of his name. He will do it. And we who are God's people will all stand with him and praise his name on that great day. But today we dread to think that some of you are wandering around between two great walls of God's power. You have heard the truth. You know where to go and you keep pursuing in opposition to God. And as long as you pursue in opposition to God you stand in danger of being overthrown by him. Repent and believe in Jesus Christ that you might be saved.

Let's pray.

*Father, we pray that you would be merciful to teach one of us, that we would not fear and panic and complain, but we would stand firm and watch for your salvation, we would believe and fear. And we pray for those who have never believed in you and never feared you, that you would show them their great danger, you would show them that they make their own way by keeping in their sins, that you would open their eyes and that you would look upon them in mercy and not in wrath. We pray that you would answer our prayers and do this for the glory of your powerful grace in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*