

Today's Sermon by Phil Layton
God's Glory in Saving Through Judgment (Exodus 14:14-31)

Last time I started with the 1st question of the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563.

- Today I start with the 1st question of the Westminster Catechism, 80+ years later.
- What is the chief end of man? If you know the answer, say it with me:
 - o Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Let me ask: what is the chief end of God? What is God's purpose in the Exodus, in everything?

Turn to Ex 14 for the answer, but we actually should know it

In Ex 14 God tells us, it's for His glory and there's much to enjoy about God in this story.

- In ch 15 God's people rejoice and praise Him who reigns forever.

Why did it take so long for God to take His people out of slavery, 400 years?

- Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart so he wouldn't let them go sooner?
- Why 10 plagues?

Not only or mainly to get Israel out. He could have done that with a mind trick,

- like Moses telling Pharaoh 'these are not the slaves you're looking for, these are not the slaves to be working for you. You will let God's people go now.'
- Pharaoh nods 'these are not slaves working for me, I will let you go, move along now.'

But this isn't the force you see in movies, God is bringing the full force of His plagues

- against the Empire of Egypt for another purpose.
 - o Not ultimately primarily to get His nation out,
 - o to get His name out to the earth,
 - o to show His glory and mercy in judgment.
 - o Ex 9:16 says it's to proclaim His name to the world.

His name is His nature, not just as Savior but as Creator and Judge and Sovereign

That's God's mission statement for the Exodus and to the end.

- Jesus applied that mission to us in Lk 24:47: *repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be **proclaimed in his name to all nations.***
- Look at Ex 14:4 for God's chief end or ultimate purpose: *And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and **I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.***

God will get glory and even His enemies will know who He is

That's the big point of this passage, the Exodus and the universe. One writer has summarized the whole Bible's message book-by-book as God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment.¹

- In Ex 14 this is what we see at the sea.
- Egypt's army has them surrounded and trapped at the shore

¹³ And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." ¹⁵ The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and **I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.** ¹⁸ **And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.**" [Hebrew 'I am Yahweh'] ¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. ²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the

waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." ²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ 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.

As we see God's great power here, may we fear God, believe in God, glorify and enjoy God. The late James Boice said this part of the book is 'the very heart of Exodus...this section can be considered the very heart of the Old Testament...the Red Sea...is extremely important...this crossing is mentioned many times in the Old Testament – even more times than the Passover.'²

Outline:

1. Looking backward – remember the Lord
2. Moving forward – trust the Lord
3. Turning upward – glorify the Lord

1. Looking backward – remember the Lord

We need to start with the context of the story and history.

- In v. 10-12 Israel is looking backward in fear but not remembering God,
- so in v. 13 Moses says fear not, stand firm, see your salvation God will work for you.
- And Moses writes this so his readers remember God as they look back.
- Egypt needed to know their gods didn't create the world, Pharaoh didn't control order.

Moses also wrote Gen 1, what we read earlier: '*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ...And the Spirit (ruach) of God moved over the surface of the waters.*'

- Now the *ruach* (wind/Spirit, same word from Gen 1) again moved over the waters, v. 21
 - o moving them for His people now.
- And in v. 20 God separates light from darkness, it says His cloud kept Egypt in darkness
 - o and it lit up the night on the other side for Israel
 - o (the '*let there be light*' is only for His people now).
 - o There's evening and morning like the first day of creation.

Remember the 2nd day of creation? '*God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."*'³

Now God from heaven divides on earth the waters from the waters for His people, a firm wall.

Day 3 of creation: '*God said, "Let the waters...be gathered together into **one place, and let the dry land appear.**" And it was so...the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.'*

Now the same God, the only God, again gathers waters of the sea together in one place

- to let dry land appear for His people, and they saw it was good for them to walk on.
- Egypt will later see not good for them.

God spoke 10x in Gen 1, maybe no accident He spoke 10 plagues on Egypt to reverse creation:

- The first plague in ch 7 lasted 7 full days (v. 25), maybe to recall God's creation week
- The plagues move from water to land, sea creatures, flying things, beasts, and finally man
- The reverse of Gen 1, plants and animals are taken out and the light of the sun for 3 days
- In the same order as creation, God plagues water, land, and sky, with death instead of life

Even the language of swarming creatures comes out of Gen 1

God's point to Egypt: 'You need to know that I am Yahweh. You're meeting your Maker.

- I am the Creator in control, ordering all things, not your gods or Pharaoh.
- I am God and you are not!

Moses' point to Israel by this language: 'remember the Lord, the almighty, the King of creation.

- As you look backward remember the mighty power of God who makes the oceans rise
 - o and makes a way of salvation by that same power.
 - o He also makes light in the darkness for you.'

Point for all God's people: remember your Savior is the sovereign Creator.

- Impossibility is His specialty. What's impossible for man is possible for God.
- Youth, remember your Creator in the days of your youth.
- Isaiah says *'even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made...I will carry and will save...Remember this and stand firm [what Ex 14:13 says], recall it to mind... remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other... [Isaiah says] Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?'*⁴

Ps 77 says it's key in distress or trouble, remember the past what God did at the Red Sea

Here in v. 20-21 Moses calls it *'dry land...dry ground,'*

- the word means withered, without moisture.⁵
- It's not just drained, it's desert dry, it's parched and hard, not muddy or marshy.
- It's the word in Gen 8 for after the flood when the land had 'dried up.'
- Remember God saved Noah and His family in the ark with walls holding back the water while God's enemies all drowned?

Remember God the Creator is also the Savior of His people through judgment, all for His glory.

Remember also the word *ark* is the same word for what baby Moses was put in back in Ex 1, a miniature ark or basket with walls to hold back water to keep him alive while others drowned.

Just like Noah and Moses were delivered from a watery death, God delivers His people again.

Moses wants them to remember God as they look back. Ex 2 says Miriam watched her brother *'among the reeds by the river bank'* - same words used in Ex 14 for the bank of the red/reed sea (either an arm of the modern Red Sea or maybe extended to a lake farther north in Bible times).⁶

Don't debate the geography and miss the theology: remember God is judge and remembers sin. Egypt drowned the sons of Israel, Moses uses the same words for God drowning Egypt's sons. Egypt cast Jewish boys in the water, now God casts Egypt's boys in the water (same Heb root).⁷

God had already saved Israel through the judgment of ch 10,

- where it says an east wind blew all night and by morning Egypt was covered by locusts.
- Then at the end of that plague God turned the strong wind on the locusts, He *'drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left...'* (10:19).

God now drives the Egyptian army into the Red Sea, and not a single soldier will be left alive.

This isn't déjà vu, this is divine retribution.

- God is a God of exact justice and vengeance is His, He will repay.
- Don't fight back, believer (v. 14). Remember God remembers sin and will judge sin.
- That's bad news for sinners, the good news is sin can be punished on the cross
 - o for believers in Christ, God remembers our sins no more
 - o and He says He casts them in the depths of the sea.
- For unbelievers who have done evil to you, don't repay evil.
- The battle doesn't belong to you, let God handle it. Your job: patience, silence.

Look at v. 14 *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.* ¹⁵ *The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.* ¹⁶ *Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea ...*

Looking backward - remember the Lord. But then

#2. Moving forward – trust the Lord

'Some trust in chariots, and some in horses [like Egypt] but we will remember the name of the Lord' (Ps 20:7).⁸

Neh 4: 'Do not be afraid of them, remember the Lord who is great and awesome...our God will fight for us.'⁹

In Ex 14:10 they're looking back in fear. In v. 11-12 they're talking back.

- Moses says in v. 13 fear not, stand by, look up to your Savior.
- Now it's basically shut up and get up and get going.

If your parents don't let you say 'shut up,' write this instead: stop talking and start walking.

- The time comes to stop moving your lips and start moving your hips in obedience.
- Move forward! Stop complaining! Start taking a step forward.
- It's time to move on, not stay in the past or keep replaying it (analysis paralysis).
- Do the next thing. Keep moving and keep doing what God said.

Some of you have deep hurts from years ago. You can't stay there.

- Pray for healing, get help, go forward.
- Step out in faith, but don't step into God's role. It says He'll do the fighting for you

Phil 3 says forgetting the things that are behind, press onward and upward toward Christ

¹⁹ *Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel ...* Angel can be translated messenger. Keep a finger here and flip forward to ch 23.

- We've only seen the angel once before in Exodus,
- the burning bush where an angel/messenger appeared to Moses,
- but not just a created being, it says Yahweh appeared or God appeared (3:2, 4:1, 4:5)

Apparently, this isn't a created angel or just a messenger of God, it's a messenger who is God.

He identifies Himself as 'I AM,' how God identifies in the OT and His Son in the NT

Look at 23:20 *"Behold, I send an angel [or messenger] before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.* ²¹ ***Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.***'

- Whoever this messenger is has power to forgive sin,
- He must be obeyed on the same level as God,
- He does what God does, and has the same name Yahweh.
- Jesus asked who can forgive sin but God alone? Answer: the Son who is God.

In Genesis Jacob said this angel/messenger redeemed,¹⁰ but only God can redeem (and His Son)

I take this messenger as the Messiah, pre-incarnate (before God the Son became man)

So go back to Ex 14 but as I mentioned last time, Jude says Jesus¹¹ saved Israel from Egypt and 1 Cor 10 says 'I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,' and it says spiritually they had provision and protection from behind, a 'spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ...' Following behind to protect like a rock.

Not a mere created angel, not a mere cloud, a mighty Christ was sustaining them

Ex 14:19 *Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them [normal clouds don't stand, but persons stand]...*

²⁴ *And in the morning watch **the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down**...[wait, is it His angel in the pillar behind them or is it the LORD? Yes! The angel of God is the angel who is God, another person of God]*

Normally in the OT this verb 'look down' is used for God looking down from heaven to earth,¹² but here is another identified as the LORD on earth in this pillar and messenger looking down. We've seen more than 1 person since Gen 1 'God created...the Spirit of God...let us make in our image'

- personal pronouns for more than 1 person,
- only 1 God, Father, Spirit on waters, Son who saves

St. Patrick: 'I arise today through the mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity
Through belief in the three-ness, through confession of the Oneness of the Creator...
Christ be with me, Christ within me, **Christ behind me, Christ before me,**
Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me'

Isa 52 says to believers in Messiah (OT word for Christ) '*the LORD will go **before you**, and the God of Israel **will be your rear guard**. Behold, my servant shall...be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted...Kings shall shut their mouths because of him...*' The King of Egypt was first of many.

- Isa 53 goes on to talk about the Messiah like a lamb who redeem His people from sin (Exodus stuff).
- And right before all that, Isa 52 uses an Exodus phrase '*all the nations, and all the ends of the earth may see the salvation*'

Hebrew yeshua, from Ex 14, but not just one nation, so the world will see salvation in Christ

14:13 *Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation [Yeshua, noun behind name Jesus]*

...Israel couldn't yet see Him like we do but Yeshua is working for them and fighting for them.

So onward Jewish soldiers, God will fight your war; In the cloud is Jesus, both behind and before Egypt, see He's fighting, you'll die in the sea; God will win the battle – Israel, on to victory!

The one we call Jesus grew up in Galilee being called Yeshua by Jews but they later see and say '*what manner of man is this, even the wind and the sea obey him?...and they feared...*'

- He's the Ex 14 God. He's no mere man or messenger,
- He's the Master of the waves, the mighty salvation of Yahweh

Is He your Master and Savior? Do you fear and obey Him? If not, turn from sin, trust Him

The right response is in v. 31: see God's power, fear the Lord, believe in the Lord who saves.

- He doesn't just make a way to save Israel's life here,
 - o He is the way, the truth, and life, the only path to God the Father is through Jesus
- Israel was facing death but literally passed from death to life on the other side.
 - o Jesus said everyone trusting Him '*has passed from death to life*' (Jn 5:24).

John said '*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*' (1 Jn 3:24 NKJV).

If you don't love Christians and the church, you're still in darkness, on the losing side

The believer's battle cry is 'the battle belongs to the Lord!' We can't our own strength confide, we're losing without the right Man on our side. Luther: 'Jesus is He...He must win the battle!'¹³

Even enemies see it, look at v. 25, middle of v. 25: *the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."*

- The wheels are coming off, the most elite chariots in the world
- And middle of v. 27 says the Egyptians fled into the water, God throws them in it.

It's like the lyric where Satan's army will also 'flee, on then, Christian soldiers, on to victory! ... Christ the royal Master, leads against the foe,' and it says trusting Him 'forward into battle...go'¹⁴

Moving forward—trust the Lord,

3rdly finally & briefly: turning upward—glorify the Lord

When Israel turned backward it was hopeless,

- but this ends turning upward in the hope of glory.

Application: don't keep looking down or around,

- lift up your head, look up to the King of glory.

v. 30 says the Lord saved Israel that day, they saw their enemies dead by the Lords' great power and they feared and believed the Lord. **15:1** *Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, 'I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously...'* It turned them upward to praise.

We'll see that more in ch 15 this week but we need to turn upward to and sing to our glorious victorious Lord and sing. This event was to forever help God's people turn upward to His glory

- They were turning inward in Ex 14:11-12, turning against Moses, but God changes them
- God says in v. 18 the point and purpose of saving through judgment is so He'll get glory
- Even in hardening Pharaoh, ch 9 says it's so God's name will be proclaimed to the earth
- He says in Ezek 20:9 *'I acted for the sake of my name...in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.'*
- Isa 63 says God *'brought them up out of the sea...caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, [it says He] divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name'* (v. 10-12)
- Why did He do it? To show His glorious power aka His name. Despite Israel's sinfulness
- Isa 43: *I am the Lord who opened a way through the waters...I will blot out your sins for my own sake¹⁵*
- Ps 106: *'Our fathers...rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power...Then they believed his words; they sang his praise'* (v. 7-12)

This should change how we praise and pray, it's not about us, it's about the glory of His name:

- Neh 9: *Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise...you heard their cry at the Red Sea, and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and... you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day. And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters...therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God...'* pray like that!
- Dan 9: *our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned...for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine... For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear. O Lord forgive...for your own sake...and your people are called by your name.*

¹ See James Hamilton's *Book by that title* where he traces that theme literally from Genesis to Revelation writer by writer.

² James M. Boice, *The Life of Moses: God's First Deliverer* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2018), 96.

³ Genesis 1:6 NKJV.

⁴ Isaiah 46:4, 8-9, 51:10.

⁵ BDB Hebrew Lexicon, p. 386. Note also Psalm 106:9, where it says God made the sea '*dry...through the deep as through a desert.*'

⁶ Phil Ryken, *Exodus* (Crossway, 2005), 391-92, sums up 'see of reeds' proposals as including 'Lake Menzaleh, Lake Timsah, the Bitter Lakes, or some other large body of water in the eastern delta. There are several problems with this view. One is that there are other places in the Bible where *yam suph* clearly does refer to the Red Sea. This would explain why the Septuagint and some modern versions translate the phrase as "Red Sea." Bernard Batto has argued that *yam suph* does not mean "sea of reeds" at all, but "sea of the end." ... northwest arm of the Red Sea [near end of Gulf of Suez]. There is still another possibility, however, that perhaps best accounts for all the evidence. Recently James Hoffmeier has shown that in former days, when its water level was higher, the Red Sea used to extend farther north. Indeed, there seem to have been times when the Gulf of Suez was connected to the Bitter Lakes in the north. If this is true, that would explain why the Bible identifies *yam suph* with the Red Sea. At the time of Moses, the Red Sea was the "Reed Sea" because there were in it places where papyrus grew. Perhaps, then, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea after all, only farther north than people used to think.'

⁷ In Exodus 14:27, the root *na'ar* (threw) is the same Hebrew letters as the word for "boy/lad" in 2:6, another possible connection.

⁸ NKJV.

⁹ Nehemiah 4:14, 20.

¹⁰ Genesis 48:15-16.

¹¹ Jude 5 ESV, some manuscripts/translations have 'the Lord' but in the phrase right before in v. 4, the Lord is Jesus Christ.

¹² Deuteronomy 26:15, Psalm 14:2, 53:2, 85:11, 102:19, Lamentations 3:50.

¹³ Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress is our God."

¹⁴ Sabine Baring-Gould, "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

¹⁵ 43:16, 25 NLT.