

# God's Providence at the Red Sea

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A couple of prayer meetings ago Mr. Brame, by way of illustration, referred to Israel's dilemma at the Red Sea. That very day it had been part of my scheduled Bible reading and at the time of that reading my heart was moved to preach on that passage knowing that I had these times to preach in the weeks to come.

But immediately upon thinking about preaching from that text, Exodus chapter 14, the carnal thought came to my mind, you know, you preached on that text before some years ago. But I know how people are here. They take notes in their Bible and they put dates by those notes. And the carnal thought comes that if I ever come back to preach from the same text then the people will think that I am not doing my work.

Well, Mr. Brame and his illustration confirmed that I must regardless of what you think revisit this text. And then just this last week in my scheduled reading I came to Numbers 14 and the episode that we have just read and I don't know, really, that I have ever paid much attention to it before. But I was taken at verse 25 that now the Lord, a second time, directs the people to come back to the wilderness of the Red Sea.

They were at the very border of the Land of Promise, but now God by command sends them back to the Red Sea. The last time they were there they saw the carcasses of the Egyptians there on the shore. But this time they were going to begin to see their own carcasses littering the wilderness. But in both instances, as we read in the text before us and also in Exodus chapter 14, in both instances the Lord was going to make his glory fill the earth. And between those two visits that Israel had to the Red Sea, they had forgotten all the lessons that God had taught them at that first visit. They had complained about everything from their diet to the leadership, that divinely appointed leadership of Moses. And now they complained about all of the dangers, those potential dangers that were there in the Land of Promise and they refused to enter because of their unbelief. And it is at that time that God caused them to revisit the Red Sea, to teach them some lessons again.

So I think we have ever warrant for tonight revisiting this text and revisiting the Red Sea. What I preach tonight is not an old sermon, but it is a common theme that I find myself drawn to so very often, no doubt, because I am, myself, such a slow learner in terms of the lessons here that I want to consider.

For this passage directs our attention very directly to the providence of God, his all wise government in the affairs particularly of his people. And to me the irony is that those of us who believe the most in the providence of God tend to have the most difficulties in terms of that providence, particularly when the operation of divine providence puts us in positions that on the surface seem to make no sense to us. For if God is truly good and if God is truly great, and he is in control of my life and is working all things out for my good, for his glory, then why is it that so often I find myself in those places, in those circumstances that don't seem to quite correspond to my definition of what good is.

And there is that tension that grows in our heart and our life between our creed and our experience, that tension that is so much a part, I think of the daily Christian experience, that tension between what we believe and what we experience. It is that old conflict between walking by faith and walking by sight.

And why is it that walking by sight is so easy? Walking by sight, living by sight so often distresses the soul. It misinterprets what God is doing. In spite of all the evidence that God has always kept his Word, so often what we see tends to so discourage us and bring us to despair. But faith looks beyond the appearances to know that God always does the best and faith always leads us to that serene rest and that serene peace in him.

Now you tell me why it was so easy for me to say that, so easy to say what faith is supposed to do in looking beyond the circumstances and bringing us to that place of rest. I know that. You know that. Why is that so easy to say, but yet it seems to be so very difficult to learn and to remember?

We all—at least most of us here, or maybe I am just preaching to a mirror this evening—are slow learners when it comes to truly walking by faith and not by sight.

The book of Exodus reveals to us the series of tests that God gave to this newly redeemed people to teach them to reinforce in their lives the necessity of that faith walk. And they were slow learners, too. And God over and over again showed his long suffering. He showed his grace to this people. So patient he was bringing them to a test, teaching them the important lesson not to be taken up by what they thought they saw, but, instead, to put their reliance, their trust, to know that serene peace that they could find in him. And they did well for a while, but then they found themselves again doing more unbelieving than believing.

As we come to our text in Exodus chapter 14, a well known text, we have the nation at the Red Sea. Up to this point everything had been going fairly well of this newly constituted nation. Oh, they had the first little hitch when Moses announced to them and declared to them that they soon would be delivered from this land of bondage, from that iron furnace of their affliction. Oh, they were happy to hear that word that deliverance was coming for all of those hundreds of years they were in that terrible bondage and slavery and now Moses comes with this word that God is going to redeem you and bring you out from this place of bondage. How happy they were.

But when Pharaoh to make bricks without straw and all of the sudden, they found themselves in difficulty, having received that first word of promise. But after that first hitch, I say, everything had been going fairly smoothly up to this point. God had sent those plagues as evidence of his almighty power against Pharaoh, against the Egyptians and those Egyptian gods. God had given them the Passover, that great evidence of the sovereign grace that redeemed them from that place of spiritual bondage as well as physical slavery.

Progress was being made. Prospects were good. They were making their way and now all of a sudden they found themselves at the Red Sea. And what to do. A dilemma. They found themselves with no place to go. They found themselves in a place where certain defeat seemed to be the only possibility before them. What to do.

Well, there were key lessons, I say, that God was going to teach them at that first visit to the Red Sea and I trust tonight that as we come to this text that we can learn those lessons, important lessons, vital lessons about the providence of God that will bring us safely through. And so tonight as we revisit the sea there are three very simple statements that I want to make to direct our thoughts.

I want us to see very simply, first of all, that divine providence is often mysterious. Divine providence is often mysterious. It is essential to see this as we come to the very beginning of our text. Israel was not at the Red Sea because they were lost. They were not at the Red Sea because somehow when they got out of the borders of Goshen they didn't know quite which way to turn and they went in this direction, but now put them at this place where there appeared to be no return. They were not at this place because they were lost, because Moses had his map upside down. On the contrary, the text makes it very clear that they were where they were at the direct command of God.

Look at chapter 13 and verse 18. We find these words that, "God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed."<sup>1</sup> That is, they went up organized for war. "...out of the land of Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

And then in chapter 14.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.<sup>3</sup>

They found themselves at the Red Sea because God had led them there. The Lord had instructed Moses what way to turn when they made their way out of Goshen. That turn seemed to be contrary to providence. It is a mysterious thing, the providence of God. Here the providence of God seemed to lead the people contrary to the promise. What a

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 13:18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 14:1-2.

perplexing command this was. This people, though they had been slaves in Egypt for all those years, I dare say they knew geography well enough to know the direction to Canaan, basically straight ahead from where they were. Oh, perhaps, northeast. Go northeast and you will be in Canaan.

But God says, "Turn south." Turn your back on the promise, seemingly. The Promised land is this way. Now you go that way, just the direct opposite of where they thought they were supposed to go to receive the promise of God, a route that led them to one of the most desolate places in that region.

A perplexing question. How can we ever get to the Promised Land if we turn our backs, if we are going in the opposite direction? An important lesson to learn that sometimes the shortest route between point A and point B may not always be the best route. God knew from the very beginning, as we are going to see, where these people were going. That Land of Promise was fixed. It was sure. The borders of that land were marked by God and they were to receive that promise. They were going to get it and God knew the best way to get them.

As they looked at their map, they thought the best way to get to Canaan was just head straight to it, but God says, "No, I want you to go south."

Sometimes in the providence of God the journey is more important than the destination. The Lord will get us where he wants us to go. The Lord will make sure that we get where we are supposed to go. But sometimes the direction and the journey that he takes us has many lessons that we are not going to learn if we just blingo, bango get to that point of destination. The Lord knew exactly what he was doing. They didn't. It didn't make any sense to them.

It is a real problem for us sometimes. We have the promise of God. We believe we know what the will of God is for our lives. Sometimes, so often, our timetable takes preeminence. Our particular plan of events takes preeminence and we don't understand and we begin to misinterpret why things are not happening by my agenda. I know this is the will of God. I know where God wants me to go. I have got that confidence. But yet when I map out the course, when I map out my plan it doesn't seem to work and God takes me someplace else and it doesn't make any sense to us and here is this tension, I say, between what we know to be the will of the Lord and where he seems to be.

I suppose over the years I have had more students, I have had more students than I could possibly begin to count over the years who know the will of God, that God has called them to the ministry, God has called them to the pastorate, God has called them and they are dead certain, but they are so quick and they are so eager to get to that destination. They want the church without the seminary. They want the church without whatever it is that God is taking them to. We always want to get to the end before. We must put this in the hand of God and realize that sometimes God will take us in directions and journeys that may seem to circumvent and circumlocute the place where we want to go.

And when our heart is fixed upon doing the will of God, when we are seeking with all that we have within us to obey God, it just doesn't make any sense. Why did these things happen that apparently are thwarting that forward route to receive the promise?

Sometimes the mysterious providence of God leads contrary, seemingly contrary to the promise he has given. And sometimes it makes matters even worse and that certainly appeared to be the case with Israel here at the Red Sea. Now there was danger on top of uncertainty. It didn't make any sense for God to say, "Go south," when they wanted to go north. Uncertain. But now, on top of that, they found themselves in that place of danger.

Pharaoh recognized the wrong turn. Pharaoh knew where Canaan was. And Pharaoh when he learned that they had turned in this direction said, "They are going to entangle themselves. The wilderness has shut them in. Now let's go get them."

And as soon as Pharaoh heard, he sends all of his armies, all of his chariots to bring back those people to the place of bondage. They had just left. Now danger. Israel certainly at this juncture was between that proverbial rock and hard place. They were hemmed in by the mountains on two sides. The strongest army on the face of God's earth was pursuing them from behind. The impassible waters of the Red Sea were now in front of them. It seemed that defeat was certain. No hint of how deliverance would come, how deliverance could come.

What to do. What to do.

You have to learn that sometimes following God, sometimes following the Lord seems to pay trouble words, seems to make the matters worse. And that bothers us.

You remember Jeremiah that prophet called by God who was given those significant and very specific promises at the very call of his ministry that God would be with him, that no matter what would happen, even though the enemy would come and the people would turn against him, God promised from the very beginning, "No matter what. I will be with you."

Now that was his promise from the very beginning. But yet as Jeremiah begins his ministry and it begins to happen exactly what God said was going to happen, the turmoil begins in his own heart.

Lord, why is this happening? I have not said anything you have not told me to say. I have not gone any place that you have not sent me, but yet every time I say something, every time I go someplace they are out to get me.

It doesn't make any sense and Jeremiah complains.

I think of that text, particularly, in chapter 12 I think it is where Jeremiah begins with his creed.

“Lord, I know you are righteous. I know you are righteous.”

And that was a problem. He knew the Lord was righteous. He knew that God does all things well.

“But yet God,” he says... And here the boldness as he expresses verbally what we think about but are afraid even to pray.

“I know you are righteous, but, God, there are some things we have got to talk about here. If you are righteous, then how come the wicked are apparently prospering? How come the wicked are apparently getting the upper hand? If you are righteous, how come I am in the mess that I am in just doing what you are telling me to do?”

And God gives a remarkable answer to Jeremiah.

“You are having a hard time,” he says, “going against the footmen. What are you going to do when the horses come against you? You are having a hard time here in the land of peace. What will you do in the swelling of the Jordan? Jeremiah, it is going to get worse before it gets better. It is going to get worse.”

But listen. The promise that God gave to Jeremiah stuck true. “I will be with you. I will be with you.”

And I say sometimes the providence of God will bring us into circumstances that make no sense to us when we examine them by sight. No matter what it is that we know to be true, when sight takes over, when we allow the circumstances to overwhelm us, to bear down upon us, no matter how well we believe and how true it is what we believe, that old sight, that old sight just begins to control us. And it brings us to despair.

So there was Israel between the sea and the mountains and the chariots of Pharaoh. Barring a supernatural intervention they were doomed. No place to turn. No place to look except up. And that is what God was seeking to teach them, no place to look.

Why is it in my life and I dare say in your lives as well, that it is so often the extremes of life that get us to looking in the right direction? It so often takes the Lord to bring us to the Red Sea, to bring us to those places in his providence where it appears that there is no way going, there is no going forward. There is no going sideward or backward. There is nothing we can do until we look up. That is the first thing that we learn here. The providence of God is often mysterious. It doesn't make any sense to us when we examine by sight.

The second thing that I would say from our text is this. That our response to providence is always crucial. Our response to providence is always crucial.

I get to my office usually by seven o'clock or so, it is quarter to seven in the mornings. Mr. Tolbert comes usually once a week, Thursday, Friday mornings about the same time to check out the church van. And we have got in the habit over these last few weeks before he starts working and before I start working just to get together and talk for an hour or so.

And interestingly enough this week when Charles came in he brought a stack of books. I was excited. I thought he was going to leave them, but he took them home. But he had a bunch of books with certain phrases, certain lines underlined that he wanted to talk about. And in the providence of God one of the books that he had was a little book on providence by Plumber. And he had these lines underlined that he wanted to talk about for a while.

Plumber said concerning providence that humbly for it is something that... how did he say it? I should have written it down. Thank you. Have you seen that book? Plumbers book on providence? It is very good.

Humbly it is our duty to study it, but boldly to pry into it, he says, we sin. Humbly we study it, but to boldly pry into it, to try to figure out and give reason to everything God does will often become sin. Interesting words.

But I say our response to providence is so very crucial. And really there is only two ways that we can respond. We are either going to take it by sight or we are going to take it by faith and in our text we have examples of both of those responses.

We can obviously say that responding by sight is wrong. Look at verse 10. We have the response here of the majority. We have how the nation reacted when they saw the problem.

“And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.”<sup>4</sup>

Can you see the connection? We are going to see this often in this passage. We are going to see a connection between what someone sees and what someone hears. Here we have the response of sight. They lifted up their eyes and they saw the Egyptians. They saw the circumstance. And immediately there was panic and there was despair. They were sore afraid. They feared exceedingly. They feared exceedingly. No idea what to do. No way out in sight. And understand, please, that as a natural response. The danger was real.

It is easy for us to sit here now and read back this story what happened so long ago and say, “Oh, you foolish Israelites.” But understand the danger was real. That was real water ahead of them. Those were real mountains on both sides and it was a real and a

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 14:10.

powerful army that was chasing after them. They had every reason to be afraid, naturally speaking. The circumstances were fearful.

And when they saw that real danger they allowed the panic and the despair to set in and they began to complain. We see that in verses 11 and 12.

Oh, they cried out unto the Lord, but a bit impatient for immediately they said to Moses, not waiting for the Lord to answer that prayer, not waiting to see what God was doing. Immediately they took their complaint to Moses.

“Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.”<sup>5</sup>

They realized again, that they were not where they were through carelessness or ignorance. They followed Moses. They went where Moses told them to take them, to lead. Didn't understand. And very typically when we don't understand we then misunderstand. And I say there was the impatience.

Oh, it looked good to begin. They cried to the Lord, but they complained to Moses, ungrateful. Their memories all of the sudden became extremely faulty. They remembered Egypt far differently now than they did just a few days ago. Place of bondage, affliction, difficulty, slavery. But now Egypt was not such a bad place.

“You should have left us there. We wanted to say,” they said.

First deliverance happened. But at the first time of hardship here the bondage was more attractive.

Walking by sight clouds the thinking. Walking by sight gives us a perception of reality that is confounded. They wanted slavery rather than deliverance. When we walk by sight the wrong response to God's providence, to God's leading. We are going to end up at the very least saying some very unwise things unto the Lord.

Then we have the example of faith that Moses gives to us in responding by faith is right. And Moses recognized the same danger. Do you understand that Moses was seeing everything that they saw? Moses saw the dust of those chariots. Moses saw the way to the Red Sea. He saw the heights of the mountains, those cliffs. Moses saw everything that they saw. But yet he also saw the solution that enabled him to be more aware of what really was than what appeared to be. I think that is one of the most important spiritual lessons that we can learn as we come to deal with the issues of life and our trust of God, that appearance and reality are very seldom the same thing. Appearance and reality are not the same thing.

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<sup>5</sup> Exodus 14:11-12.



It appeared that the nation was hopeless. It appeared that there was no way out, but the reality was just the opposite. There was something more real than faith laid hold of than what gave appearance to such. And so Moses tells them exactly how faith should respond.

Look at verse 13.

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”<sup>6</sup>

Verse 14.

“The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”<sup>7</sup>

There is faith's reaction to the circumstance. Don't be afraid.

As I said earlier, what we see determines what we fear. They saw the Egyptians. And they were afraid. Moses says, “Don't fear. See the salvation of the Lord.”

How do you see the salvation of the Lord? I can see the dust of the chariots easily? But Moses says, “See the salvation of the Lord.” See that. See the reality of God's Word. See the reality of God's presence. See the reality of God. And when you see the reality of God, then you will not be afraid. You will not panic. You will not despair about the circumstances that are arising. Don't be afraid.

The great command, study that sometime in the Scriptures. Just go through the Bible and see the times when God tells his people, “Don't be afraid. Do not fear.”

And the amazing thing is that every time God gives his people the command, “Don't be afraid,” they are in a circumstance where if they have a lick of sense naturally they have every right to be afraid in fearful circumstances. But look away from what you see with the physical eye to the reality of God. Fear God as we are going to see. Fear God, the ultimate reality and don't be afraid. Don't be intimidated. Don't be panicked by what you see around you. Just stand still. Stand firm. Resolute, unwavering. A military term here. Get ready for action, because God is going to do something. See the salvation of the Lord.

What momentarily was unseeable see that. See God's salvation. And face confidence against all odds. You have the confidence of faith that the Lord will fight for you. Now, therefore you just hold your peace. You just keep silent. Don't do anything. Allow God to do something here without your interfering, without your objecting. God is going to fight. There is the confidence of faith against every odd.

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 14:13.

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

Pharaoh was sure of victory. Pharaoh just knew that he had these people. Pharaoh was sure of victory. Israel was sure of defeat, but Moses was sure of deliverance. And he was the only one that was right. The confidence of his faith.

But then don't miss the object of faith. Don't miss the object of faith. All the way through the focus here is put upon the Lord, the Lord's person, the Lord's promise, the Lord's acting in behalf of his people. Faith is objective. We must learn that if we are going to deal with the issues of providence and be able to handle these mysteries of providence, understand that the object of that faith is objective. Faith is not wishful thinking. It is not wishful thinking. It is not here the power of positive thinking that Moses is telling the people to engage in. It is not blind optimism. It is not a whistling in the dark in the face of danger. It is faith.

But understand that it is not faith that makes it happen. It is not faith that makes it happen. I think, sometimes we get this idea that if we just believe hard enough, if we just believe that everything is going to turn out ok, we can make it happen if we just... That is not faith. Faith is not positive thinking. It is not just believing hard enough to make it happen. Oh, if I just believe it will be ok. It will be ok.

No. Faith doesn't make... it wasn't their believing that dried up that Red Sea. It was the Lord and it was the promise of the Lord and faith lays hold of the promise.

All things are possible with faith, yes, but why? All things are possible by faith because of faith's object if it is true biblical faith. Faith's object is the Lord and it is the Lord that does those things. And we come to that reliance. We come to that reliance even when the circumstances appear to be contrary to the promise, the promise must stand. God must stand. It is faith that God will act for us.

And I dare say it is that spirit, that attitude of that or else dependence that God desires of his people. That or else dependence, it is God or else. Bring us to that utter and total dependence upon the Lord no matter what happens, no matter where we are, what the circumstance, learn that God is more real than anything that we can see with the physical eye.

The last thing that I want to say is this. That God's objective in providence is invariably accomplished. Providence is God's all wise preserving and governing of all of the things that he has created unto the end of his own glory and the good of his people. And ultimately there is nothing better for God's people than God's glory. And the text before us brings out those two objectives very, very clearly of God's providence. That God's glory is the moving cause. It is the moving aim of his providential dealings.

Look at verse four of our text. Here is the Lord saying up front before anything happens. God has got them here to the Red Sea and the Lord announces up front exactly what is going to happen.

“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.”<sup>8</sup>

Look at verse 17.

And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.<sup>9</sup>

Before anything happens God tells them exactly what is going to happen.

“I brought you here. Now listen. I am going to harden Pharaoh’s heart. He is going to see that you have made this apparent blunder. And he is going to come after you.”

Now tell me. Why should they have been surprised when they saw the dust of those chariots coming? The very fact that the dust of the chariots were now on the distant horizon was evidence that God was in control. But yet they forgot the promise and saw the dust. But God was in control.

The form of the verb here, I won’t go into the technicalities of grammar, but the form of that verb in verse four, verse 17 as well, “I will be honored,” it is a verb that intensifies the personal resolve in that expression. The Lord says, “I will be, I resolve, I determine to be honored.” Not just a little prediction here of what is going to happen, but here is God’s intent. “I intend, I resolve to be honored by what is going to happen here.”

None of these events took God by surprise. What happened at the Red Sea was not a divine reaction, but a divine plan. For God was disposing all of the events, the small ones the big ones to accomplish his good pleasure.

Do you remember at the very beginning of this whole thing back in Exodus chapter five when Moses came and announced to Pharaoh God’s plan and God’s purpose to redeem these people, to get them out of that iron furnace of affliction, Pharaoh said, “I don’t know who this Lord is. Who is the Lord? I don’t know the Lord.”

But we have here at the Red Sea God’s definitive and God’s irrefutable and God’s irresistible answer to Pharaoh’s question. Who is the Lord? God was to reveal himself to Pharaoh, going to address this pagan man, ignorance. And the Egyptians would know and God would be honored and there was not to be any obstacle. There would be no obstacle that would survive the accomplishing of the glory of God. That Egyptian army that was so powerful and too powerful for Israel was nothing for the sovereign and powerful God.

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

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 14:17-18.

With what ease God conquered that powerful Egyptian army. The Red Sea which was a natural force beyond human control, what was it to the Lord? He told Moses to spread out his rod. With ease he took care of every obstacle. God was to be glorified. God was to receive the honor and God led his people in that mysterious way. He led the people into that place of conflict, into that place of uncertainty, into that place of apparently certain defeat that he might be glorified.

And I would submit to you that if God's glory is our objective then we should be quite content to be wherever he puts us. If God's glory is our objective we ought to be quite content to experience whatever he brings into our way. But it is only—and I say this from personal experience and unfortunately personal testimony that—it is only when our good is defined independently of his glory that we start having troubles with his providence, when we define our good in terms of ourselves, when we define what is good in terms of how it just affects me and the glory of God doesn't cross our mind. Then, indeed, we are going to have those restlings and we are going to have that turmoil and we are going to have that trouble and we are going to have that despair and that despondency and that wondering what in the world is God doing if God is doing anything.

But our glory, when our good is defined in terms of self instead of in terms of his glory, then the mysteries of providence will plague our souls. Unless we learn to submit our good to his glory, the Red Sea waves are going to be constantly lapping against our feet. And the dust of Pharaoh's chariots are going to be constantly choking us.

We need, by the grace of God we need—and this is not something that we can work up, for it is not natural. I say it is not a natural response to put even God's glory above my own. It is not natural. We need the grace of God and we need the ministry and the help of the Spirit of God to put ourselves subordinate to God.

Creedally I know to do that. Doctrinally I know to do that. I know that God is infinite, that I am finite. I know that. You know that. That is our creed.

You know as well as I that so often in our lives we have got ourselves above the Lord. And our good and our pleasure and our help and our this and our that and our whatever it is, takes precedence over what his ultimate good and glory is.

I am not saying... let's not start beating ourselves up here and saying, you know, God's glory is always my bad. No, God's glory is our good. It is our good. But let's define our good in terms of his glory that when God accomplishes his glory as he does, that can only be our good. And our good is attendant with his glory.

The events here at the Red Sea became a rebuke to that distrust. It became a great encouragement to faith.

Let's consider briefly—our time is gone—but consider briefly here what God did to show his glory, to accomplish the good for his people. He answered prayer.

Verse 15.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”<sup>10</sup>

God gives the instructions in answer to Moses' prayer and it is interesting, again, the grammar makes it clear that the Lord is referring specifically and singularly to the prayer of Moses and not to that collective cry, whatever it was back in verse 10 of the people. Moses had prayed. Moses now waiting upon the Lord receives the Word and the instruction from God. God's purpose in the very beginning was delivered. But God's deliverance here followed Moses' supplication.

Moses used the means of grace, expressing his dependence upon God. And so must we. A belief in the providence is never a resignation. It is never to create a passivity in our lives in our hearts in our attitudes. Passivity of spirit is not trusting the providence of God. That is a belief in paganism and fatalism. Belief in the providence of God is going to create an active display, an active exercise of faith that uses the means of grace that God has given to us.

Moses cried unto the Lord and the Lord answered his prayer. And the Lord revealed his presence. Look at verse 19 and 20.

And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.<sup>11</sup>

The revelation of the divine presence, the angel of the Lord made his appearance. I believe a pre incarnate appearance of Christ himself. But there he was.

But the ironic thing is that that divine presence was there all along. You go back to chapter 13 and verses 21 and 22 you find that that divine presence was there. It was there all along. But now in this place of danger, in this place of uncertainty, God, as it were, rearranges that presence, alters the position, to highlight the safety and the protection that they were going to enjoy standing between them and the enemy, darkness behind, light ahead. The presence of God.

It is that sense of the presence of God that enables us to stick the difficulties.

What does the psalmist say?

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

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 14:19-20.

Yea, though I walk through that valley of the shadow of death, that valley of deep darkness where I can't see, I don't know where I am going. There are so many uncertainties. I don't know, Lord. But yet I will fear no evil. Why? Because thou art with me. That divine presence is the solution to the fear in the days of uncertainty.

So God revealed his presence to his people, manifesting himself to the precise needs that they had. They were saved. And then there was the deliverance. You see that recorded in verses 21 and following. You know the story well, that supernatural deliverance. The waters of the Red Sea were divided. God did for them what they could not do for themselves. He did it graciously, the discrimination that is evidenced here. You see both the goodness and the severity of God in this same event. That sea that Israel dreaded became their protecting wall. That sea that the Egyptians thought was their ally in surrounding the nation of Israel became their grave, a discrimination, judgment. But the grace of God for his people in delivering them.

God saved them. Look at verse 30.

“Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”<sup>12</sup>

Everything they feared, everything that naturally caused them to panic and despair was now resolved. The mountains were on the other side. The sea was now behind them and the Egyptians were there dead upon the shore. What grace and what a reviving work. Then how good God was. Look at verse 31 finally.

“And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians.”<sup>13</sup>

Can you see this link again between what you see and what you hear? T

They “saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.”<sup>14</sup>

Overwhelmed with God. They feared the Lord more aware of God now than they were of anything else. And I have defined fear for you like that so many times. The fear of God is essentially living in that awareness of God that God is more real than anything else. There was the evidence and there was the trust. There was the trust. Great lessons to learn.

God brought hem there to teach them. The tragic thing is, I say, as we come to Numbers chapter 14 this people, some slow learners, some not learners at all. And God brought them back to the Red Sea. He is going to show his glory once again, but this time I say

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<sup>12</sup> Exodus 14:30.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 14:31.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

not dead Egyptians on the seashore, but dead Israelites strewn throughout the wilderness because of their unbelief.

I don't know where you are. I don't know whether you are at a Red Sea or in the middle of it, across it, but I have a hunch. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I think I know enough to make this prediction. That sooner or later every one of us are going to find ourselves in the end at the Red Sea. We are going to find ourselves again in a place where nothing makes sense, where nothing makes sense and we don't know where to go. We look here. We look there. There appears to be no way out. We will be there. May God help us to look up. May God help us to walk by faith. May God make that which is so easy for me to say, to walk by faith, the reality of our eyes and the reality of our experience that we might through our experience be the means whereby God fills the earth with his glory. May God make us be instruments to accomplish his glory for our good.