

DO IT AGAIN, DELIVER US, LORD

Psalm 114: 1-8 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Many have rightly called Psalm 114 “The Song of the Exodus.” If we would try to depict the miracle of the Exodus, or just the miracle of the Red Sea, we might find ourselves like a young boy who got home from church. His mother asked him, “What did you learn in Sunday School, Johnny? Her son paused for a few moments, then began to relate the story. “Well, Mom, the Egyptians had the Israelites trapped against the sea. So Moses called in the engineers and threw a pontoon bridge across the Red Sea. During the night, with the deepest fog all over, Moses moved all his troops across the sea to the other side. In the morning the Egyptians saw what had happened and they started to rumble across the bridge in their tanks. But just before they got to the other side, Moses called in an air strike and sunk the bridge with all the Egyptians on it.” “Johnny,” said his mother. “You know your Sunday School teacher didn't tell the story that way!” “Well, not exactly,” said Johnny. “But if I told it the way she told it, you wouldn't believe it.”

That’s the way God’s miracles are! They are harder to believe than fiction because they are so remarkable. Truth, even miraculous truth is stranger than fiction. The word that grips my heart going into this psalm to preach it today is the first word in verse 7. “Tremble!” “Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.” There are so many lessons just in the Red Sea deliverance. A few of the lessons are: “Follow God’s lead. He turns dead ends into highways. God never leaves you. Never. When you think you’ve wandered into a box canyon of nowhere, God is taking you somewhere. He will not be robbed of His glory. Try to stand in God’s way like Pharaoh did, and you’ll wish you would have surrendered to His will. God’s plans and purposes for us are bigger than yours and mine. And better too. Don’t be afraid to say, “Don’t be afraid!” Sometimes it’s preferable to stop praying only and rather start praying and going forward. God’s way isn’t only the best way. It’s the only way. God’s power means He can and He will. Trust Him always. Have you ever felt like your back was against a wall? Have you ever been between a rock and a hard place, with nowhere to turn? Have you put in a lot of time going down a winding avenue of life, led by the Lord, only to find it appears to be a dead end? If so, I dedicate Psalm 114 to you—there in your box canyon, there in your maze and labyrinth.

I call us to venture like Peter once did—by simply obeying the Word of Jesus. This past Friday morning, Christian Klein read an August 28th devotional on Peter walking on water. Do you remember the storm that night on the Sea of Galilee? The disciples were about to lose their boat and go down into the raging waters when they saw someone walking on the water. At first they thought Jesus was a

ghost, but Jesus reassured them it was really Him. That's when Peter boldly asked Jesus, "If it is really You, command me to come walking to you on the water. Matthew 14: 29 tells us that Jesus said, "Come!" It's here that Lowell Lundstrom said in his devotional, "Actually Peter didn't walk on the water as much as he walked on the Word of Jesus." Strange things happen when we tremble at the word of the Lord and just do what He asks us to do—walking on His Word.

During World War II, on the night of March 24, 1944, 21 year old Flight Sergeant Nicholas Stephen Alkemade was a rear gunner in Royal Air Force. Alkemade was one of seven crew members inside the dive bomber Avro Lancaster B Mk. II, *DS664*, of No. 115 Squadron RAF. Returning from a huge bombing raid on Berlin, east of Schmallenberg, *DS664* was attacked by a Luftwaffe Ju 88 night-fighter. The Lancaster Bomber caught fire and began to spiral out of control. Because his parachute was unserviceable, Nicolas Alkemade jumped from the aircraft without a parachute, preferring to die by impact rather than burn to death. He fell straight down 18,000 feet to the ground below. His fall was broken by pine trees and a soft snow cover on the ground. He was able to move his arms and legs and suffered only a sprained leg. The Lancaster crashed in flames, killing pilot Jack Newman and three other members of the crew. They are buried in the Hanover War Cemetery. Alkemade was subsequently captured and interviewed by the Gestapo, who were initially suspicious of his claim to have fallen without a parachute until the wreckage of the aircraft was examined. He was a celebrated prisoner of war, before being repatriated in May 1945. The Germans gave Alkemade a certificate testifying to the fact. Nicolas Alkemade lived and worked in the chemical industry after the war and died June 22, 1987.

All of us have miracle stories, but the greatest miracle stories in history that people experience to share are those miracles where God has told them to do the impossible, the improbable, and the inconceivable, and they as individuals, or couples or people have obeyed His voice. Psalm 114 is a gemstone psalm, unrivalled in the 150 psalms in telling the story of the Exodus in the most graphic and in the most striking boldness. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said of Psalm 114, "True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this Psalm." The deliverance of Israel from Egypt has always been and will ever be regarded by the Jews as the greatest event in their history. Looking at the psalm, six of the verses refer to miracles in nature and only two verses deal with people, the Israelites. First of all, the marvel of the miracle of the Exodus is recorded. Secondly, the method of the miracle of the Exodus is recalled and thirdly, the motive of the miracle of the Exodus is revealed. Let's examine the marvel, the method and the motive of the miracle of the Exodus.

THE MARVEL OF THE MIRACLE OF THE EXODUS IS RECORDED.

(I.) Notice verses 1-2. “When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion.” The miracle of the Exodus is how God got out 3+ million Israelites, out from under terrorizing slavery and bondage. The words “went out” comprise the heart of the meaning of the exodus. How could this marvel ever have happened? An exodus means a mass departure of people, especially emigrants, a withdrawal, an evacuation. The largest such mass exodus, mass departure, withdrawal, and evacuation of people is God’s divine deliverance of the Israelites from abject treachery and slavery in Egypt. The people who subjected the Israelites were Egyptians, under Pharaoh, a people of a strange language. God did this mighty miracle of delivering His people under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, the two sons of Amram and Jocebed. Judah in a special sense was His sanctuary where the tabernacle and the temple were and would be, and the land of Israel would be His dominion, His mighty dominion in the realm of the earth over whom God Himself assumed rule and authority as their King.

Part of this psalm deals with God appearing to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Exodus 19: 1-6 tells the story where we read, “On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” Beloved, the marvel of the Exodus from Egypt is a remarkable miracle of love and grace and omnipotent deliverance.

The Israelites are rightly called “the house of Jacob” because it was Jacob, renamed by God Israel who heard that his beloved son Joseph was alive during the terrible famine. He learned that Joseph was second in command to Pharaoh and the head ruler over all the storehouse of food Joseph saved during the previous seven good years before the seven years of ghastly famine occurred. When they told him, “Joseph is still alive and is ruler over all the land of Egypt, Jacob’s heart became numb and he did not believe them. But when Jacob’s sons told him the words of Joseph and he saw the wagons Joseph sent for the Israelites to move, the spirit of their father revived, And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still

alive. I will go and see him before I die.” Listen to what happened in Genesis 46: 1-7. “So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.” Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt...v. 27--“All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.” Does God keep His Word? What a marvel! When Joseph died, another Pharaoh came into power and the Judah folks, the Jews became his slaves—as he tried to kill every baby boy born. That’s how Moses got to grow up in the house of Pharaoh’s daughter because Jocebed made a basket bed and put him into the crocodile infested Nile River. God protected Moses, and now at age 80, he was the leader of the Exodus, though God alone was the Deliverer.

430 years after the 70 persons in the house of Jacob came to Egypt, they left Egypt with a strong hand after the 10 plagues, the death of the Egyptian firstborn, and the mighty Passover. Exodus 12: 27 tells us how many Israelites left Egypt—600 thousand men on foot, besides women and children. The estimated 3 million may be 3 million short of the full number. Tremble before the God of Jacob who knows how to evacuate, withdraw and lead an exodus of millions across the barren wilderness for 40 years to bring them into the Promised Land. When the people went out, Judah became God’s sanctuary—amazing—and God made His people, the sons of Jacob His sanctuary and all Israel even while in the wilderness His dominion—feeding them manna and bringing water to them out of barren rock. Thank God this marvel is recorded. Secondly,

THE METHOD OF THE MIRACLE OF THE EXODUS IS RECALLED.

(II.) Notice verses 3-6. The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?” The Lord rescued His people from slavery to dwell with them: Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. He redeemed them to be with them, to be their God, to rule over them. He did not save them to leave them on their own. He did not redeem them to let them forever wander in the wilderness. So how did He do it? Three of the mighty miracles are recalled by the psalmist. And poetically, the psalmist makes the truth come alive by personifying nature. The

psalmist gives the Red Sea eyes and feet, and the Jordan River the power to flow backwards, not running downstream but turning around to go upstream, and he gave the mountains and the hills the ability to dance and leap and skip like rams and lambs. The poem summarizes 40 years comprehensively into three parts (1) the dividing or parting of the Red Sea to make a path through the middle to the other side, -- This happened at the beginning of the Exodus.(2) the parting of the Jordan River—this happened 40 years later when the Israelites walked across the dry Jordan River into Canaan Land. (3) The third event happened in between the two crossings as a mighty earthquake accompanied the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Exodus 19: 18 states, “Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.” Deborah’s Song in Judges 5: 4 states, ““LORD, when you went out from Seir, when You marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water.” We read further David’s words in Psalm 68: 7,8, “O God, when you went out before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, Selah --the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.”

The artistic portrayal of all three events has the parting of the Red Sea completing the exodus out of Egypt, the crossing of the Jordan as commencing the entrance into the Promised Land, and the mountains and hills tell of what happened between those two events. Alexander MacLaren put the poetry into another form saying, “What ails thee, Sea, that thou fleest? Jordan, that thou art turned back? Mountains, that ye leap like rams? Hills, like the sons of a flock?” Here the poet challenges nature to explain her behavior? Was the Red Sea sick with the flu when she lifted her water into two walls to let the Israelites pass through? What was ailing her to let her waters congeal like hard jello for long enough for 3+ million Jews to pass through? Explain your behavior, muddy Jordan. Did you forget that water flows downstream and not upstream? Mountains and hills, what got into you when you started trembling and skipping and leaping and the rocks became as fluid as the sea and river? And how did the fluid become as solid as the mountains and hills? What kind of exuberance did you feel, mountains and hills as the Law was given? What caused your trembling, skipping and leaping delight? Okay, nature—speak up! But the questioner, the psalmist does not wait for nature to reply. The four questions are rhetorical. The psalmist leaves the four questions unanswered. His readers knew the answer. So do all of you. It’s time for the disclosure—and the psalmist is all about motives for nature’s response. Thirdly,

THE MOTIVE OF THE MIRACLE OF THE EXODUS IS REVEALED.

(III.) Notice verses 7-8. “Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint

into a spring of water.” Now the ideas of man are confounded by the real motive of nature bowing down to obey the mind and heart and command of the Lord. What was it that changed the Red Sea from a death trap into a four-lane highway? What made the Jordan lose its sense of direction? What turned the mountains and hills into shaking jello? Was it the sight of a nation of millions on the march from bondage to a land of freedom? Was that it? No, no, no. The answer is before us in verse 7. “Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.” The answer is: Nature is mobile at the presence of the Lord. God being with Israel was the reason why they made it through the Red Sea. His presence is what drove back the Jordan. Creation itself is amazed at the God who is present with Israel. It stands back, it trembles, it flees. Nature is not amazed at us--not even at 3+ million of us, but at the God who dwells with us, in us. His presence among and living in His people is an awesome reality and the psalmist pictures the sea and the river and the mountains and the hills awestruck by it.

The psalmist gets carried away. He cannot stop with three miracles—let’s include 2 more. At the presence of the Lord, something happened on the first year of the wilderness wandering. From the tsur—meaning a low-lying rock comes enough water to quench the thirst of 3+million Israelites plus all their livestock. The poet said, “Who from the hard and stony rock did standing water bring; and by His power did turn the flint into a water spring. On the last year of the exodus, God’s presence brought water from a sela – a high cliff—a promontory. Both the lowly rock and the high cliff were types of Christ—I Cor. 10: 4. The first rock, the tsur, typifies Christ in His humiliation, and the second, the sela, speaks of Christ’s exaltation. The first supply of water came from Jesus’ side at the crucifixion when He was smitten—for Moses was to smite the Rock. The second supply of water was introduced by God telling Moses to speak to the Rock—Numbers 20: 8, but Moses struck it twice, breaking the picture and the type, and he was disciplined by not being able to enter the Promised Land—Numbers 20: 9-13. This second supply of water is the supply of intercession beloved. We all because of the fountain open at Calvary, can “speak to the Rock.” Beloved, if the psalmist describes creation itself responding to God’s presence among His people with fear and trembling, then how should we respond to God’s presence among His people now—to His word, His will, and to His promptings? Should we not be amazed? Should we not stand back in awe? I call us beloved to tremble today at the presence of the Lord, to rise up like the Red Sea and make a way, to turn back to make a way, to tremble, to skip before Him and His word, to leap in joy at His presence. Will we learn the lessons, or will we defy His Word as Pharaoh and his army did? Bow your heads.