

"The Lord Fights for You"

Exodus 14:15-31

January 12, 2025

Thanks – preachers (Pastor Broc, Colin, Kraig)

This morning we come to the greatest event in the OT, surpassed only the coming of Christ and His cross in the NT.

Cliff hanger—the Egyptian army bearing down on the Israelites with their back up against the Red Sea.

Review:

- In response to the 10th plague in which all the firstborn sons and cattle died in Egypt, Pharaoh ejected the Israelites out of Egypt.
- God manifested His presence in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead the people of Israel. And He led them right into a dead end—a strategic place of desperation. Of course He did this on purpose, to put them in an impossible situation so that He could demonstrate His mighty power to deliver them in a way no human being possibly could.
- God announced His purpose in chapter 14, and we will see it again later in the chapter. **[vs. 4]** So God's purpose is to be glorified by making it known that He is the one and only true living God. As we have seen several times in the book of Exodus already, ***Yahweh is the Lord and there is no other. His glory is unrivaled in all the earth!***
- So God hardened Pharaoh's heart to pursue Israel so He could do 3 things: 1) Bring judgment on unrepentant Egypt, 2) Finalize Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh, and 3) do all of this to display His glory as God alone.

We left off in chapter 14 in a terrifying scene as Israel is camped against the Red Sea and they can see the Egyptian Army marching toward them with chariots and horses. Vs. 10 says they "feared greatly" and "cried out to the Lord." Then they turned to accuse Moses of leading them out into the desert only to die (11-12).

Their fear is understandable. Their cry to the Lord is out of desperation. But where does faith enter into our fear and desperation? Do the Israelites have faith here? If they do, it is weak at best. We know from their accusations against Moses that the Israelites are emotionally immature. And emotional immaturity is a symptom of spiritual immaturity. What do I mean by emotional immaturity? They are so dominated by their feelings that they take their fear and anger out on Moses rather than looking to God for protection and deliverance. We are emotionally and spiritually immature when we cry out to God for help but take our fearful anger out on others at the same time. Emotional maturity results from the discipline of trusting God with our obedience so that faithfulness to God overrides the momentary whims of our emotions.

One of the reasons I belabor this point is because the Israelites were much more articulate in their accusations against Moses in vs. 11-12 than in their cry for help. Their focus is not faith in God, but finding fault with Moses.

Being in a place of desperation before God is not bad—it can be healthy as long as our heart posture is one of *faith*. In our desperation for God to intervene, we need to ask ourselves, "Am I actively and persistently trusting in God in my desperation?"

This is why Moses responds the way he does in **[vss. 13-14]**. Moses is calling them out of frenzied fear and into steadfast faith.

- "Fear not!" Why? Because God is with us!
- "Stand firm!" Why? God is in control!
- "Be silent!" Why? Because the Lord will fight for you!
- What are they to silence? Their bitter complaints and accusations, their fear and worry. In other words, stop spewing your unbelief and doubt, and trust in God!

Not let's pick up the story in vs. 15...Scripture reading: **[Exodus 14:15-31]**

What we are going to see in today's passage: **God is glorified in making Himself known through the gracious salvation of His people and the**

utter destruction of His enemies. Therefore, the only path of wisdom is trusting in the saving power of God's grace.

We are going to unpack vs. 15-31 by highlighting 6 timeless truths:

1. **We are called to actively trust God who is not only sovereign over all circumstances and the hearts of all people (including our enemies), but also resolved to be glorified as God alone** (Ex 14:15-18).

[vs. 15-16] When God tells Moses to stop crying out and move forward in vs. 15, He is calling all Israel to take a step of faith.

The essence of vs. 15 is that it's time to move from prayer to action. Moses had told the people to be silent, to stand and see the salvation of God, but *trusting God does not mean inactivity*. Faith is active. Trusting God means stepping into the hard situation, trusting God to be sufficient and to be at work fulfilling His good purposes. Faith requires action of some kind. At times it may be the action of restraint (not letting our emotions drive us or resisting temptation), but faith always includes the action of obedience.

Now in vs. 17-18 God restates His purpose from vs. 4 in what He is about to do. **[vs. 17-18]** *God's purpose is His glory*—that's always His purpose. God always has a plan and the purpose behind His plan every time is to reveal His glory. In this case, He will be glorified by making it known to the Egyptians that He alone is the sovereign Lord.

So once again God demonstrates His jurisdiction over the hearts of men and hardens the hearts of the Egyptians, luring them into the Red Sea. But notice, God has not yet told the Israelites what the final outcome will be. He just gives Moses one step at a time. First, He tells Moses in vs. 4 that he will harden Pharaoh's heart to be glorified over Pharaoh. Then in vs. 16 He tells Moses He will part the Red Sea so Israel can pass on dry ground. Next in vs. 17 He says that He will draw the Egyptians into the Sea after them, but He

does not yet tell Moses how He will bring the walls of waters down on them—that won't be unveiled until vs. 26. God may unveil His plan step by step—rarely does God give us the whole plan at once—but we can walk by faith knowing that God is sovereign over all circumstances, the forces of nature, the hearts of men, and He will not forsake His purpose to be glorified as the Sovereign Lord over all.

2. **The nearness of God's presence is our ultimate source of protection** (Ex 14:19-20).

What we are about to see in vs. 19-20 is so encouraging. **[vs. 19-20]** The angel of God refers to the pillar of cloud in which God Himself in manifesting His presence. This is a *theophany*—a visible appearance of the invisible God. Back in 13:21 the cloud was simply identified as "the Lord." In 14:24 we will see that the Lord is in the pillar of fire and the cloud. This is similar to how the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in chapter 3, but God Himself spoke from the burning bush. The point is that God is not merely designating his work to an angel, but He Himself is present in these encounters.¹

In vs. 19 the presence of God in the cloud that was going before them moved behind them so that God's presence stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites as an impenetrable wall. I take vs. 20 to mean that God's presence cast a deep shadow of intense darkness on the Egyptians that paralyzed them from moving forward. Yet God's presence provided light for the Hebrews so that they could break camp during the night and get ready to move.

God's presence was Israel's protection. Perhaps the picture here could be captured in the words of Isaiah 52:12: "...The LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel *will be your rear guard*." Do you see the encompassing protection of God's presence? He goes before us. He is with us—alongside us. And He is our rear guard.

¹ Philip Ryken, *Exodus* (Preaching the Word), pg. 62. See also Douglas Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC), pg. 340.

3. **God's power to deliver His people is supreme over the laws of nature** (Ex 14:21-22).

[vs. 21-22] There is no natural explanation for this miracle as some suggest—like the wind merely drying up a shallow marshy area of the sea. Vs. 21 specifies that God Himself directed the wind all night to move the water which in vs. 22 piles up to form a massive wall on each side. The Hebrew word used here for *wall* refers to a very large wall, as in a city wall, not a small stone wall or retaining wall.² This indicates a massive amount of water supernaturally being suspended against for the forces of gravity by the same east winds God used to bring in the locust (10:13).

Vs. 21 details that “all night” as the Israelites were breaking up camp God sent the east wind to progressively push the water higher and higher. This was not a six-second miracle. For hours the Israelites observed God's power over the forces and laws of nature creating a dry highway through the sea. Yet it would take faith to step between the city-high walls of water to follow Yahweh and Moses to the other side.

4. **God ultimately reigns over the hearts, minds, psyche, and actions of His enemies such that their defeat is certain** (Ex 14:23-25).

[vs. 23-25] There are three things that contribute to the Egyptians defeat. First, ***the Lord hardened their hearts*** so that they pursued Israel into the sea **[cf. vs 17]**. The idea here is that from hardened hearts they were so bent on their own way and their desire to overcome the Israelites that they foolishly proceed into dangerous territory. Israel may have marched through the walls of water ahead of them, but the Egyptians had no favor with Yahweh like Israel did. Their hardness of heart blinded them to obvious danger.

Second, ***the Lord threw them into a panic***. This caused a traffic jam that impeded their progress. And finally, ***the Lord put dread in their hearts***. They said, “the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.” Notice how this fulfills God's purpose of being glorified—the Egyptians themselves are acknowledging the supremacy of Yahweh.

Notice how God does not need external forces to bring down His enemies. Hardening their heart, throwing them into a panic, causing dread to fall on them—God rules over the hearts, minds, psyche, and actions of His adversaries.

Let me press this point. If you believe that you can ignore or even rebel against God and that you are in complete control of your faculties, let me remind you that your sanity or insanity, your peace of mind or your dread of heart is in the hand of God (King Nebuchadnezzar—Daniel 4). Your current sanity is by the grace of God. You do not have ultimate sovereignty over your mind, body, or heart. You are at the mercy of God, so you would be wise to surrender to His mercy.

5. **God's final justice toward the wicked is subject to His own timing, but when it comes it will be swift, decisive, comprehensive, and unavoidable** (Ex 14:26-28).

[vs. 26-27] Not only did the Lord disable the Egyptian army in the midst of the sea, He commanded gravity to resume and the walls of water decimated the Egyptian army. God did this in the morning so that the Israelites could see God's salvation from their oppressors. Notice how comprehensive God's defeat of the enemy was—***“not one of them remained”*** (28).³

You may not be driving a chariot between walls of water, but you face the same danger if you are not secure in Christ. Death can come at any moment in which final judgment is inevitable for the unbeliever. Today is the day of salvation. You don't know if you have tomorrow. Not a single

² Douglas Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC), pg. 342.

³ Cf. Exodus 10:19; 8:31

person can escape the judgment of God apart from making Jesus Christ your refuge. God's judgment is comprehensive. Every sin will be paid for either by you or by Christ. Faith in Jesus is the only difference.

6. **God, who saves His people and destroys His enemies, is to be feared and trusted** (Ex 14:29-31).

[vs. 29-31] Vs. 29 is a repetition of vs. 22. The writer repeats it here to show the contrast with vs. 28. **[28, 29]** The Egyptians were drowned; the Israelites passed through on dry ground. Not one Egyptian remained; and not one Israelite was harmed. God is glorified in the destruction of His enemies, and He is glorified in the salvation of His people.

The result of Israel seeing God's mighty power that day was two-fold. First, *they feared the Lord*. That is, they regarded Yahweh with reverence because they had stood in awe of His mighty power, a God of justice who is not to be trifled with. Second, *they believed Yahweh* and Moses His servant. God demonstrated that He could be trusted and nothing was impossible with Him.

And this is precisely the response that we should also have to the story of the Exodus. When we see what God has done to save His people and crush His enemies, we should fear the Lord and we should trust Him.

So how do we apply the story of the Exodus to our own lives? Well, it would be a mistake to merely suggest that the Exodus is model for how to get through hard times—although it should certainly inspire faith when our faith is tested. The exodus is not so much about us as it is about God and how He saves. The exodus establishes a paradigm of God's salvation. The same paradigm that we see in the Salvation of Christ. Namely, that **God saves His people by grace through faith.**

- Just as there was nothing the Israelites could do to save themselves from Pharaoh's army, so there is nothing we can do to save ourselves from our own sinful nature.

- Just as there was nothing Israel could contribute to their salvation, nor did they deserve it, so we can contribute nothing to our salvation, nor do we deserve it.
- Just as Israel's salvation was a gift of grace—God did it all simply because of His mercy. So our salvation in Christ is a gift of grace—all of God because of His mercy.
- And just as God's saving grace was brought to bear as Israel responded in faith, so God's saving grace is brought to bear in our lives when we put our faith solely in the person and work of Christ.

If you are a Christian, you are not waiting for your exodus moment. Your exodus has already taken place through death and resurrection of Christ which opened the only way of safety into eternal life.⁴ And your exodus through Christ defines to how walk through every other trial in the fear of God with faith in God.

I got to thinking that if God's purpose in the exodus was to be glorified by making Himself known (4, 17-18), then one of the ways we can glorify God today as we study the exodus is making sure that we see what God is revealing about Himself in Exodus 14.

⁴ See 1Cor 10:1-14

What We Discover About God in Exodus 14

If God's self-stated purpose in the exodus is to be glorified by making Himself known (14:4, 17-18), then one way we can glorify God today as we study Exodus 14 is by seeing what God has revealed about Himself, such that the fear of God is rooted in our hearts through faith in God.

1. *God's passion is for His glory* (Ex 14:4c, 17b). Unless we understand who He is and that He alone is God, we cannot navigate life or interpret eternity with a clear, truthful vision.
2. *God's ways are wise, working for His glory and our good, even though they are often mysterious or perplexing to us* (Ex 14:1-2).
3. *God has jurisdiction over the human heart, to harden or soften, to judge or to save* (Ex 14:4a, 17a, 8).
4. *Yahweh is the Lord and there is no other. His glory is unrivaled in all the earth* (Ex 14:4c, 18).
5. *God guides His people with His word* (Ex 14:1-2).
6. *God protects His people with His presence* (Ex 14:19-20).
7. *God hears the cries of His people, even when their hearts are shaken and their faith is weak* (Ex 14:10-15).
8. *God saves His people by grace through faith* (Ex 14:10-15). There was nothing Israel could do or nothing they could contribute to their deliverance, nor did they deserve it. It was a gift of grace to be applied by faith.
9. *God's miraculous power is supreme over the laws of nature—creation is subject to its Creator* (Ex 14:21-22).
10. *God reigns over the minds and psyche of His enemies such that peace of mind or dread is in the hand of God* (Ex 14:24-25).
11. *God is glorified in the destruction of His enemies* (Ex 14:24-28, note 25c).
12. *God's final judgment over His enemies is subject to His own timing, but when it comes it will be swift, decisive, comprehensive, and unavoidable* (Ex 14:28).
13. *God, who saves His people and destroys His enemies, is to be feared and trusted* (Ex 14:30-31).

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