

When God's People Witness the Power of His Salvation

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Date: 24 April 2022

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- [0 : 00] When I was at school, I remember we had these posters on the wall. There was this burger bun, and in the middle, there was spaghetti bolognese, there was curry, there was some Mars bars, there was a few burgers in there as well, there was a roast dinner.
- And I remember looking at this poster and thinking, it's a pretty good sandwich, to be honest, they got there. And underneath the poster, it said, you are what you eat. Now, clearly, if I'm honest, the healthy eating message was a little bit lost on me on that poster.
- But the biggest problem with it was that's not true, is it? You are not what you eat. In fact, a better slogan we see in Exodus is that you are what you do.
- Who we are is reflected in what we do. And we see that with God, with the Lord, with Yahweh throughout the book. The Lord revealed himself, his name, back in chapter 3 and said, I am who I am.
- I am Yahweh. And then it's as if the rest of the story is him explaining who he is, what his name means by what he does.
- [1 : 18] God's deeds define his character. I wonder if you notice that in the reading. Look down at verse 4 of chapter 14. This whole event is so that people will know who Yahweh is.
- It says, What I want us to see today is that we worship this same God of the Exodus.
- And this event is here to teach us that even in the most difficult times of life, in times when we are most tempted to doubt God, to doubt who he is, this passage will teach us that we can always trust him because he will always fight to save us.
- There's two things I want us to see in the passage that's written on your notice sheet you got on the way in. We're going to see doubting God in the face of danger and trusting God in the face of his deliverance.
- Let's look at the first one, doubting God in the face of danger. Picture the scene. You're an Israelite. All you have ever known is being enslaved in Egypt.
- [2 : 44] You've seen loved ones die of exhaustion. You've seen friends die in construction accidents. You've perhaps seen your children murdered in genocide.
- You've held fast to the stories of your people, the stories of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who saved his people from famine, who brought them into Egypt. And now you've seen the God you worship come in and obliterate the Egyptians, smashing them so hard in the plagues.
- It's as if creation began to undo itself. And now you walk out of Egypt for the first time in your life, for the first time in generations, free.
- Imagine you strut out of Egypt with a newfound confidence. This freedom you've never known before because Yahweh has saved you.
- And not only has he saved you, he is right there with you, leading you out. But there was a surprise in our passage. I wonder if you noticed it in the very first verse, in verse 17 of chapter 13.

[4 : 01] God doesn't lead the people in the way you would expect them to go. If they were to head north to Canaan, then why are they heading south?

Now notice why God said, if they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt. From the perspective of the Jewish people, if they know they're supposed to go into Canaan, this makes no sense at all to them.

What we see, though, is that God knows better. On that shorter, direct route, they would have encountered the Philistines, a tough, militarized people, and it would have been carnage for them.

They're not ready for war yet. They've never fired shots in anger. This is one big family, not a battalion. Yahweh knew that if the Jewish people met them at this stage in their existence, it would not have been a pretty sight.

And they might change their minds, turn back. See, God knows what's best for them. Meanwhile, back in Egypt, Pharaoh, he's just come round to, the shock of his entire workforce has left.

[5 : 19] They've gone. And so what does he do? Well, the most powerful man in the globe at the time. Summons the most powerful army in the world at the time to go after God's people.

He takes 600 of the best chariots. I love the line, along with all the other chariots as well. And today, it would be, you know, 600 Challenger 2 battle tanks roaring through the desert, along some scimitar tanks as well, ready to identify, destroy, and to defeat this poor, helpless enemy.

It's as if there was an arsenal so fast, so strong, so lethal, no army at this time would stand a chance, let alone a bunch of former slaves. And put yourself in the shoes of the Israelites.

They are camped by the sea with that immovable force on one side, and then the unstoppable force of the Egyptian army coming towards them on the other.

And who is the one who has led them to this place? Yahweh. The Lord has. Just look at how the Israelites feel in verse 10 of chapter 14.

[6 : 40] As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to Yahweh. They said to Moses, was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?

What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone, let us serve the Egyptians? Egyptians. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

Where has their confidence gone? Where has their confidence that caused them to walk out of Egypt after Passover? And remember, God's still with them.

He hasn't won the victory and sent them off on their own. He's right there with them. But their eyes are so focused on the danger they see, they forget he's there.

They forget the rescue he's just achieved for them so dramatically. So what they do, they complain to Moses. And Moses, he is God's special representative.

[7 : 44] So to complain to Moses is really to complain to God. Let's look at that complaint again in verse 11. It means rose-tinted glasses, isn't it?

Any danger, is their life better in Egypt? Of course it wasn't. But as we read this, I think we can sympathize with them, can't we?

God, he's led them out. He's led them to this place. They've been obedient to him. And they're in trouble and they don't understand what is going on.

They don't understand why God would allow this to happen. They come face to face with danger, with uncertainty, and they are filled with fear, filled with doubt in God.

I wonder if as you hear that, does that sound familiar? If it doesn't sound familiar at some point in your life, it will.

[8 : 51] If you follow Jesus, he will lead you into situations that are hard, that are painful, situations which we have no control over. Why God?

Why have you made me go through all of this? And we know that in a sense, don't we?

We're coming through, Lord willing, the back end of a pandemic. We're feeling the effects of a war on the other side of the continent. And yet many harder things will come into our lives.

Things that have the potential for us to fear, to doubt. And when those times come, we will ask, why? Why God? Why have you allowed this to happen?

Why did my mother get cancer? Why did I lose my job? Why did all the kids pick on my children?

[9 : 58] Why did my son commit suicide? Why has my daughter come out as transgender? Why is my mind filled with so many dark thoughts at night I cannot sleep? Why?

Perhaps you're here and you're a new Christian and all of a sudden your friends, your family are mocking you. Why have you let this happen? Don't you care about me, God? But here's the thing, we can't stay at the why because if we do, we can put on rose-tinted glasses like the Israelites did.

We look back and we can be tempted to think that we're better off without God all because our eyes are filled with fear of what lies ahead of us. I mean, think again of our passage.

God doesn't find the Israelites down at the Red Sea and think, ah, my map was upside down. we should have gone left and north instead of right and south. Of course not.

He is in control. He knows what was best for them even when all they could see was danger and hardship. And it's true of the Christian life.

[11 : 12] Jesus says, follow me. He doesn't say, come follow me and life will be hunky-dory. He says, follow me. Come and die. Pick up your cross and follow me and join with me in suffering.

But suffering, which is never pointless. I don't know why we get put into difficult situations like verse 4 of chapter 14 here.

What I do know is that the Bible never really gives us the answer why. It always gives us the answer who of who God is, of what he is like.

And what we see here is that God wants us to trust him in our suffering and doubt so that he might get the glory. Now we might hear that and think that sounds cruel and horrible.

Why should I suffer? Why should the Israelites have gone through that for God to get the glory? Well, think of it like this. when we think of God, God is not a larger version of ourselves, a larger version of you or me.

[12 : 27] If I was to speak about seeking my glory, what would I be? Well, I'd be a complete megalomaniac. Or in Charleston, I'd say a total bam.

At times, I am one. If all you saw was me seeking my glory, you'd be like, Craig, life is not about you. And you'd be right. If I lived to seek my glory, if we lived to seek our own personal glory, not just would that be wrong, but it would be evil because you and I are not the centre of the universe.

But God. God is not like you and I. God is spirit, infinite, eternal, and changeable in his being, in his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and truth.

He is unlike us. And praise his name for that. He is the centre of the universe. All things are made by him, through him, and for him.

So of course, all glory is to go to him. But the thing is, when God seeks his glory, we are the ones who benefit from that. When God seeks his glory, he does so through saving sinners like you and I, people who don't deserve to be saved.

[13 : 46] Like the Israelites, we aren't perfect, holy people. They're moaners and they're unthankful who quickly forget what God is like. And if we're honest, we can be like that as well, can't we, I'm sure.

See, when God leads us into difficult times, when we are filled with fear and doubt, the goodness of God, what we need to do is not focused on what causes us to doubt, but instead to lift our eyes to Yahweh, to look to him in his word and see how he has fought to save us.

And that's what the people do. They begin to trust God in the face of his deliverance. Danger's looming. They're doubting.

Look at verse 13 of chapter 14. What does Moses say? Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Why? Well, verse 14, we see, the Lord Yahweh will fight for you. You need to only be still. Do not be afraid.

[15 : 02] Watch him act. Put your trust in him and what he is going to do for you. And so Yahweh tells Moses that he needs to lift his staff, to stretch out his hand.

And notice in verse 19, God moves to surround them, to protect them from the Egyptians coming. And a mighty wind comes and divides the sea so they can walk straight through it.

My kids love the film The Prince of Egypt on, was on Netflix now, but came out many years ago. And I love this scene in the film. If you've not seen it, you can recommend it.

The scene when they walk through the Red Sea part and there's a flash of lightning. You see these fish up in the sides and you see the, these skyscrapers of water either side of them walking through.

And as the Israelites are making their way across, they're almost at the other end of the scene. and the Egyptians are let in. They start charging through that, that pent up frustration that meant they couldn't get the Israelites before.

[16 : 10] They're let loose and they are traveling through. But then Lord Yahweh gets their wheels stuck in the mud. There's panic. They don't know what to do. And then they start remembering what Yahweh did to them in Egypt.

And they're worried they're fighting against them and they are totally right, aren't they? Moses told to put out his hand again. Verse 27 we read, the Egyptians were fleeing toward it.

Yahweh swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen. The entire army of Pharaoh that followed the Israelites into the sea. And just so we're sure, not one of them survived.

How would you react if you were an Israelite? These people who had kept you in slavery and beaten you and tortured you, killed your children.

Well look at how the Israelites respond in verse 31. When the Israelites saw the mighty hand of Yahweh displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses, his servant.

[17 : 23] I mean, wouldn't you in that situation such awesome power and might before your very eyes, your victory, your salvation, your freedom achieved right there before your very eyes.

Fear's the right response, isn't it? Just reverent awe of who God is. Sometimes I think we can view God as a bit like a cosmic Siri or a cosmic Alexa.

we put in our requests and he does them and sometimes we think he mishears us a little bit and doesn't answer us properly. But God's not like that at all.

We're reminded here that Yahweh is not to be messed around with. He is a warrior who fights for his people. I wonder if that's in your vocabulary of how you think of God as a warrior.

There's no warrior like him. In fact, this is how it is sung about God in the next chapter, in chapter 15. They go on to sing a celebration of this victory, of what Yahweh has done.

[18 : 34] And they don't sing, yes sir, I can boogie like you might hear at Hamden. Instead, they sing in verse 3 of chapter 15. Yahweh is a warrior. Yahweh is his name. To go against this God, what we see here is that it is a terrifying thing.

This is not a God we want to be against. He's not a God who's some heavenly yoga. He wants us to be on his side.

We are the ones who have left him. We are the ones who have rejected him and he wants to fight for us, not against us. And the way that happens is by trusting in Jesus.

I love the book of Exodus. It's no surprise when you read it that there's so many films made about it. But in reality, it's a true story that points to a greater reality.

A rescue story not just for Israel but for everyone who trusts in Jesus. See, Jesus is the God of Exodus 14 here. You read John's Gospel. I believe you've been going through John's Gospel.

[19 : 45] And you see in that book that Jesus says he is Yahweh. He is the I Am. He is the God of the Exodus. You see, in John's Gospel, he crosses a lake not by parting water but by walking on it.

You see, he feeds people in the wilderness. He does other Exodus-type miracles. But Jesus came not to save us from getting wet. He came not to save us from an earthly enemy like Israel and the Egyptians.

But Jesus came to rescue us from our sin, from our slavery to it. Rescue us from Satan. Rescue us from death.

See, like in the flood, God's anger was poured out. So for our sin, God's anger must be poured out again.

There is still a tsunami of God's wrath for our sin but as one poet writes, we are spared the burning flood only by the blood. Only by Jesus take the punishment on the cross that we deserve can we be saved.

[21 : 00] And if you're here and you aren't a Christian, listen to this offer. See in this story what's facing you. What Jesus has done for us, it's as if Jesus stands in the middle of this parted sea of God's judgment and we can pass through safely to our heavenly home, to the banks of Jordan as we sung about in that first hymn together.

And we can pass through safely because he bore those waves of judgment on himself. See, what we're reminded of here in Exodus 14 is that if you trust in Jesus, he has fought for you.

Your greatest problem has been dealt with. your problems right now could be monumental. I've preached this passage once before and I didn't realise that there was a couple in there whose son had committed suicide a week earlier.

Your pain could be monumental. A pain so great you didn't know that it could hurt this much. You might feel like you are in a depression so dark that you can't remember what it's like to live any other way.

As horrific as those things are, what we need to be reminded of is that they are insignificant compared to our sin. And Jesus has fought for your sin up to the point that it cost him his life.

[22 : 44] The Red Sea was the means God used to save his people and defeat his enemy and it's the same with the cross. For there the cross of Jesus saves us and defeats our enemies, Satan, sin and death.

Let me read again that passage we read earlier in our service from Colossians chapter 2. Let me read from verse 13. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ.

He forgave us all our sins. Having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us, he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Let's go back to where the Israelites found themselves. Down a road they didn't expect.

In a place where God led them to. When God leads you down roads that might cause you to fear, whether that's a pain of physical anguish or mental pain or relational suffering, you may never know why he led you there.

[24 : 02] Never. When we are filled with fear with what lies ahead of us, we need to look up and to read God's word and be reminded by his spirit that God gave everything for us.

Everything. Everything. which means that he'll never forget you. He'll never leave you. And for some of us, we do that more instinctively.

Think of the Israelites walking through the Red Sea. No doubt some of them are marching across. Come on, Yahweh. You've got this. Look at this water.

Isn't this amazing? We are safe. We're going to get there. Praise to you, Yahweh. Others, I'm sure, were terrified. Get past, get past.

Quick, quick, quick. Get through, get through. But both of them were saved. Because their salvation was not dependent on how they felt at that time, but on the God who fought for them.

[25 : 14] So brothers and sisters, we live in dark days, it feels like at times, doesn't it? We turn on the news, that's all that feels like. We don't know what's around the corner. We don't know the path God's leading us down.

But do not be afraid. He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you. Christ has promised to be with you to the very end of this age because he's defeated Satan's sin and death.

So keep looking to him. Keep looking to what he has done for you. And as we'll sing in a moment, what gift of grace is Jesus my Redeemer. There is no more for heaven now to give.

God's given us everything. So let's trust in him. Let me pray. Father, we praise you because of who you are.

You are the God who is all-knowing, who is all-powerful. You are the God who speaks and the wind and the waves obey you. Father, at times we confess that we are filled with fear, filled with doubt.

[26 : 29] May we know your presence at the time we ask. May we know the peace that passes all understanding. May you help us to care for one another, to love one another well, to spur one another on pointing each other to the truth.

even when we don't want to read it. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have defeated Satan, sin, and death.

That we think back to Easter we celebrated the other week and we praise your name, Lord Jesus. That one day when we take our final breath here, we'll take a new one, an air that we've never breathed before.

We'll hear a voice we've never heard and yet we will recognise it as you. We will see a face that we've never seen before and yet immediately we'll know it's you.

For at that time we'll no longer live by faith but instead we shall live by sight. for one day we'll be with you forever. For you have defeated our greatest enemy so we praise you for that, Lord Jesus.

[27 : 42] And it's in your name we pray. Amen.