

The Salvation of the Lord



Bro. Ricky Cunningham
Exodus 14:10-18

I was reminded this week of a story that I heard years ago, but I just love it. It is the story about the little boy who went to Sunday school and when Sunday school was over and he got back home, his mother, as she did from time to time, asked him what he learned in Sunday school. On this particular time, the little boy said to his mom, "Mom, this morning the teacher taught us about how God sent Moses on this great rescue mission of his people out of Egypt. As he was leading them out of Egypt, they came to this body of water called The Red Sea. Moses being the great military strategist he was called on the military engineers to build a pontoon bridge over the Red Sea. When they finished this pontoon bridge over the Red Sea, about that time, Pharaoh's army was in hot pursuit of them, was on their heels, and they just safely made it over the bridge. When Pharaoh's army got in the middle of the bridge and when he saw that they were all over the bridge, he got on his walkie-talkie and he called in a military airstrike. The pilots of those planes were so precise they took out the bridge with missiles and killed all of Pharaoh's army. With the children of God on the other side, they praised God for the precision of the air force of Israel." Then he took a deep breath and his mother looked at

him and said, "Son, is that really what the Sunday school teacher taught this morning?" The boy looked at her and said, "No mom, but if I told you what she really said you will not believe me at all."

We are going to read a story this morning that you know not all people believe is true. But yet, it is a story I believe is true, it is a story you believe is true, and it is a story that is the central story of the Old Testament as God continues to bring His people out of Israel. Please understand that the nature of this study is to get through the book of Exodus in one year. Because of the length of the book, we can't do a verse-by-verse exegesis of each chapter. So, what we are trying to do is just give the big picture of the story of Exodus, and especially the big story of each chapter, and of every story in the book of Exodus. So because of that, we can't read the entire 31 verses of chapter 14. But just so you get the feel of what is going on this morning, so you know the background to our story, we want to read from Exodus chapter 14, beginning with verse 10, and reading through verse 18. What we want you to see this morning is the ultimate salvation of the Lord.

Scripture

"When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, 'Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.'" And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that

the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

Normally when we share God's Word with you, we let the theme and the points unfold as we get to them in the passage. But this story is so huge I want to give you the theme and the points right up front, and then we will talk about them as we walk through these verses. When I examined these 31 verses of Exodus chapter 14, here is what I see as the big picture—if you are going to go away with one thought today from this chapter, here is what I think the thought ought to be.

Theme

God wants us to face what is in front of us so that He can get glory over what is behind us so that ultimately others will know who He is.

Can I say that one more time? The big story of this chapter, the big story of this event, the reason it is in the Bible, is so that we will face what is in front of us so that God will get glory over what is behind us so that ultimately others will know who He is. Amen?

Now, let me give you the three points that I think are clearly revealed in this chapter. The first thing we are going to see is God designed the first part of the wilderness journey so that He would get glory over Pharaoh so that all of the Egyptians would know He is Lord. Then, we will discover that He also designed the wilderness journey so that when Israel faced what was in front of them and they saw what was behind them, they would realize what was inside of them. What was in front of them? The Red Sea. What was behind them? Pharaoh and his army. But what was inside them? Fear...and He wanted them to know that. Then we close with this thought that the salvation of the Lord, God bringing Israel through the Red Sea, was so that ultimately He might bring them to a healthy fear of Him

instead of an unhealthy fear of Pharaoh. Again, here are the points that are revealed.

Three Points

- 1. God designed the first part of the wilderness journey so that He would get glory over Pharaoh so that all of the Egyptians would know He is Lord.**
- 2. God designed the wilderness journey so that when Israel faced what was in front of them and they saw what was behind them, they would realize what was inside of them.**
- 3. The salvation of the Lord, God bringing Israel through the Red Sea, was so that ultimately He might bring them to a healthy fear of Him instead of an unhealthy fear of Pharaoh.**

Now, let's dig in to this story. It opens with the children of Israel beginning their wilderness journey. Now if you will remember, Kory taught us last week that God didn't lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. That was just about a two week journey or approximately one hundred and fifty miles. Instead, He led them by way of the wilderness towards the Red Sea. Now, get this picture. When the fourteenth chapter opens as they come out of Egypt and they start towards the Red Sea, God has them turn back. Then, the Bible is going to mention some cities where they are going to camp. As they do this, Pharaoh gets word of what Israel is doing in the wilderness and he draws the conclusion that they are wandering in the wilderness. They have left Egypt but they don't really have a clear direction on how to get where they are going. To him, instead of it looking like they were following their God, it looks like they are just wandering in the wilderness. In other words, he believes they are trapped and the wilderness is closing in on them. But we are going to discover that, ultimately, God has them turn back, zigzag in their journey, so that Pharaoh will think they are trapped. In reality, it is Pharaoh who will be trapped.

Wow! Did you catch that? God says I am going to harden his heart again and he is going to pursue the children of Israel. As he pursues them, I am

going to get glory over him and all of the Egyptians are going to know I am Yahweh. Now, I don't want to startle you if you are new to Hardin Baptist Church, but we are honest here; we are honest about God. When I read this story, it is a story about God, Pharaoh, and a battle, and if I can say this, Pharaoh doesn't stand a chance! God is making His strategic move in Israel's life so that ultimately Pharaoh will believe they are trapped, but what He is really doing with Israel is setting a trap for Pharaoh. Why? So that ultimately He can get glory over Pharaoh because ultimately He wants all of the Egyptians to know who He is—HE IS THE LORD.

This past weekend, because it was DNOW, we had the three boys all weekend so we took them camping at Hillman Ferry Campground. Yesterday morning when we got up, it was a little chilly so we didn't immediately rush out and do all of the campground activities, we stayed in the camper for a little while and we ran through ALL of the things you can do in a camper with three grandboys. Finally, we got down to the last thing we had to do in the camper and that was checkers. Crider and I played against Memish and Finley. Now, Crider always likes to be on my team when we have competitive games because Papaw doesn't go easy on the enemy no matter who it is. So ultimately, it came down to Crider and I taking on Finley. Let me get this picture painted in your mind. Papaw is fifty-five years old playing checkers with his seven year old grandson by his side against his five year old grandson and Memish. The game started out where Crider and I jumped into a big lead. As the game began to progress, I said to Crider, "Crider, we have this game won!" We had not won yet, but I knew we already had the game won. Then the game began to change just a little bit because of our strategy. The next thing you know, Crider had gotten a little nervous, and he looked at me and said, "Papaw, are you sure we are going to win?" I said, "Crider, I promise you. We are going to win." All of a sudden, Memish said to Fin, "Fin, I don't know what he is doing, but he is doing something. I just can't see what he is doing." Fin, with all of his might and with all of his little choices as a five year old, he began to move his checkers. (Now, we play checkers to where if you have a jump then you have to take the jump.) The next thing you know, Finley is down to his last king and one checker, and me and Crider have four

kings and about five other checkers. All of a sudden, I move a king and Finley thinks he has got a jump. He does, but when he takes that jump, it is over. Now, if I can say this, it was over before he ever took the jump. It was already over before the game was ever over because I knew about ten moves before that Finley and Memish were trapped. Crider and Papaw were going to get glory over them.

Pharaoh didn't stand a chance! Because when God purposed in His heart that He was going to get glory over Pharaoh so that all of the Egyptians would know He is the Lord, it was over. Now, please hear me. When God hardens Pharaoh's heart, don't think God is making Pharaoh choose something he doesn't want to choose. No, he wanted to do what he did. So when the Bible tells us that God hardens Pharaoh's heart here in the fourteenth chapter, what the Bible is telling us is God is guaranteeing that Pharaoh is going to do what he really wants to do. And what he really wants to do is not what he just did, let his people go, but what he really wants to do is go pursue them and bring them back into the land of Egypt so that he can have them as servants. You understand that, right?

How many of us, like Pharaoh, have made decisions that we really didn't mean to make, but because of the emotional circumstances we made a decision and then later regretted it? See, Pharaoh lost his first-born son. He was really torn up, and out of that emotional state, he released God's people to go serve God. But in Pharaoh's heart, he never wanted to let them go in the first place. Now, the Bible is going to tell us that Pharaoh changes his mind and he wants to pursue Israel. He even says to his servants... *what have we done? How did we let those 600,000 men leave? Man, their wives were serving us! Their children were the future of our economy.* And as God hardened his heart, he gathered his 600 choice chariots and other chariots with his officers and army, and they pursued Israel.

Now, can I just call a time out here? I don't know how you and I can read our Bible and ever believe that life is ultimately about us. It is not. When you read this story like all of the other stories of the Bible, you are going to

come to understand that life is all about God. Now, if you are an unbeliever, your life doesn't have to be about God, but if you are a believer, God has designed your life with Him in mind. What is His ultimate design for your life? What is the ultimate design of your salvation? What is the ultimate design of the first part of your journey through the wilderness? It is for God to get glory so that others may know who He is. This may be a shock to some of you, but life is not about you. It was never designed to be about you. How can you continue to sit under the gospel and then still make decisions in your week with you in mind and no thought of God? I don't understand that. You do understand what the Bible is teaching here, right? When Israel got freed from the Egyptians and Pharaoh, God then caused them to pursue them to the bank of the Red Sea. See, when you become a believer, yes, you are going to be set free from sin, you are going to be set free from spiritual bondage, but please don't be surprised when you wake up one morning and what you have been freed from is still pursuing you. Amen? According to this story, ultimately what you have been freed from (as it continues to pursue you) gives God the opportunity to get ultimate glory in your life. As He gets the ultimate glory in your life, guess what happens? Folks around you come to know who He ultimately is the Lord! Wow!

So now, the children of Israel are being pursued by Pharaoh and his army. They are camping near the Red Sea and they are facing the Red Sea. All of a sudden, they look back and here comes what they have been freed from coming after them! You talk about being between a rock and a hard place! They are there, the Red Sea in front of them, Pharaoh's army behind them. I believe this with all of my heart...that when God led them out of Egypt He knew the path He was choosing for them would lead them to the Promised Land, Canaan, but He knew there would be a Red Sea between them and Canaan. I personally believe that God led them this way so that they would be on the bank of the Red Sea and Pharaoh would think they had trapped them as he pursued in behind them.

Here is what I am submitting to you this morning. As new believers in Christ, before you get to the 'Promised Land' there are going to be times

you are going to find yourself facing something in front of you that seems unmovable. Then when you look behind you, it is going to feel like what you have been set free from is pursuing after you. When you face that, what I am telling you is that God designed it that way. Now, there are situations that you get into where you are not where you are supposed to be and you are where you are because of sin in your life. Amen? I am not talking about that. I am talking about you being where you are supposed to be because you are not wandering in the wilderness but you are following God and God brings you to a Red Sea. All of a sudden, you feel something behind you and something in front of you. Seemingly, there is nowhere to go. God has designed that to ultimately reveal who you really are.

The children of Israel were afraid. They were fearful. They feared Pharaoh greatly. Man, just a little while ago they were free from Pharaoh. They were on the path to the Promised Land and thought they would never see him again! All of a sudden, he shows up and they are scared to death of him. It's just like some of us—scared to death of God's enemy, scared to death of our past, scared to death of what we have been freed from. We are so afraid we really don't have victory over it. What I am presenting this morning is God has designed your life so that you will have to face what is in front of you and you will have to face what is behind you so that ultimately you will see what is inside you. It's amazing what comes out of our mouths when we are afraid. Sometimes we want to go back and say we really didn't mean that. No, you meant it. It just takes those types of situations for you to realize what is really going on inside you sometimes.

Do you know what the first thing the children of Israel said was? Did you bring us out into the wilderness because there weren't any graves in Egypt? You talk about irony! You talk about an oxymoron! I mean, am I not right? Those big pyramids, were they not tombstones? There were graves everywhere in Egypt! The children of Israel are saying to Moses...was there no place to bury us in Egypt so you had to bring us out here into the wilderness so that we could die out here so that we could have a fresh grave? That is what fear does. They said, did we not tell you

to leave us alone and let us stay in Egypt? Hold it. Hold it. Hold it. I thought God raised up Moses as an answer to their prayer...but now they are saying they had rather stayed in Egypt because they realize now they had it better in Egypt and it would have been better to be a servant to Pharaoh than to die in the wilderness. Are you kidding me? Did God ever reveal to Israel that it was His plan to lead them out of Egypt so He could kill them in the wilderness? No!

You better get over your fear. Many years ago, I read that fear is painting a mental picture and then waiting for that picture to come true. Meaning, in that state of fear we view God through our circumstances rather than viewing our circumstances through God. Does anybody find it ironic that the children of Israel thought that it was Moses' choice and God's choice that would cause them to die in the wilderness? When we come to the end of the wilderness journey, it was not Moses' choice or God's choice, but their choice that caused them to ultimately die in the wilderness. You are not better off going back to wherever you were in sin. No matter what you are facing right now in your life, please hear me! If you are where you are supposed to be following God, God has designed this with His ultimate glory in mind, and that is for Him to get victory over what has been in your past so that ultimately others around you can see Him, and so that you can get over your fear of your past and build a strong faith in who He is.

You know, sometimes we want to avoid the Red Sea. Sometimes we want to go around it. Sometimes we want to go under it or over it. God will have none of that. He is going to take us through it. So the first thing He has to say to Israel is fear not. In other words, don't panic. Stand firm. Don't follow your fear and run. Don't follow your fear, wave the white flag, and surrender to Pharaoh. If you will just stand still, if you will stand firm, if you will not give an inch, I promise you, today you will see the salvation of the Lord. Guess what? You don't have to say a word. Just keep your mouth shut and the Lord will fight for you today.

Then, this is kind of strange, God says to Moses...why are you crying out to me? What He is saying is why are you praying to me right now? This is not

time to pray. Whoa, did you hear that? God tells Moses this is not the time to pray. This is the time for you to tell the children of Israel to go forward. Did everybody get that? You do know sometimes we Christians use prayer as a delay tactic, amen? There is only one way to go, and that is forward. The only reason they turned back was so that God could trap Pharaoh so that He could get glory over him so that all would know. So now, there is only one way to go, and here is their thought...Whoa! That's a sea, Lord. God says that's right, it is. Do you remember that stick? Yeah, just lift it up. Stretch out your hand, divide the waters and the people of Israel will cross over on dry land. Wow! God says I am going to harden the Egyptians hearts, and do you know what they are going to do? When they come to the bank of the sea, they will come right in after you, then I will get glory over Pharaoh and all of Egypt will know who I am. Then all of a sudden, the Bible tells us that the angel of God who had been leading them suddenly moves from in front of them to behind them, and that glory cloud that had been leading them moves from in front of them to behind them, and it is giving darkness to the Egyptians but it is giving light to the children of Israel. Oh, what a picture! You know that Pharaoh made the decisions he made because he walked in darkness, and you know Moses made the decisions he made because he walked in light. Please hear me...the New Testament picks up on this and tells us that we are not children of darkness, but we are children of the light. You know that, right? There are times in your life when you follow the revelation of the light of God when God will quit leading you and move Himself between you and what you are facing.

Then, do you know what Moses does? He lifts up that stick. Now, you talk about a holy moment! Can you imagine being Moses and having two and half to three million people behind you and God tells you to raise up your stick, and when you raise up your stick the waters are supposed to part? Do any of you think that in his mind, maybe the enemy whispered in his ear...*What's going to happen when you raise that stick if nothing happens?* Can you imagine when Moses started to raise that stick if nothing had happened? But something did happen. When he raised that stick, an east wind that the Lord brought began to blow.

Now, if I can correct something right here, don't ever let anybody tell you Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea. Moses didn't part the waters of the Red Sea; all Moses did was raise his hand with the stick. Now, can I just be honest with you all? That is not going to work very often. Raising a stick over your problem is not going to solve your problem unless the Lord told you to raise the stick. Amen? I mean, you guys do realize this, right? When you are facing your Red Sea and you depend on the Lord instead of yourself, the Lord just has some resources at His availability that you don't have. He can just make some things happen that you can't make happen. He makes things happen that just blows your mind and this story is going to blow your mind.

Here is what happened—Hollywood has this so wrong—when Moses raised up the stick and the east wind began to blow all night, the east wind parted the waters. There is a wall of water to the right and there is a wall of water to the left. Now, everybody knows that naturally if you dam up the water you can get a wall of water here, but what is going to happen to the rest of the water? The rest of the water is going to flow away. Amen? That is what Hollywood pictures. The wind is stopping the water, but then the next thing you know the water rushes away, and all of a sudden there is a dry bed. That is not what the Bible says. Two times the Bible tells us that when the wind began to blow, there was a wall of water on the left and a wall of water on the right. It was the first aquarium! Not for man to see nature, but for nature to see man. I mean, you have to get this picture! The children of Israel start through and they didn't even get mud on their sandals! God made a highway of dry dirt out of that sea! Can you imagine getting about halfway across the Red Sea and then you look to the left and there is this wall of water, and then you look to the right and there is a wall of water? The Bible doesn't tell this, but I just believe with my sanctified imagination that all of the little fish on the left side and all of the little fish on the right side had their noses pressed up to that wall of water! I don't know this to be true, but I want to believe it is true that here they were, praising God for what He was doing for His people as He brought them out of Egyptian bondage, and then all of a sudden they get to the other side. What a story!

Now, I have been to Bible college and I read some of the scholars from time to time. I know liberal scholars tell us that this is not exactly the way it happened because it was not the Red Sea, but it was the Sea of Reeds, reeds being those things that grew in swamp lands and marsh lands. I understand that.

I don't know if this is true or not, but I heard a story about a young man who came to Christ. He was on a bus reading his Bible and he happened to be reading in Exodus chapter 14, and he just could not contain his emotion. When he read what was happening he started to say out loud, "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen!" There was a man sitting beside him who was a preacher who had just graduated from seminary, one of our liberal seminaries. He was just reading his newspaper while the young man was reading his Bible, and he turned to the young man and said, "What are you reading?" He said, "Oh man! I am reading the story about God parting the Red Sea for the children of Israel and I am just praising God for what He did!" The preacher just out of seminary said, "Well, I need to correct you on just a few things of your thinking here. First of all, it was not a sea. It was just a swamp. It was just a marshland. It was the Sea of Reeds and the water was not but about ten inches deep." then he picked up his newspaper and went back to reading. About two minutes later, the young man who had just come to Christ and was reading from the book of Exodus got really excited and started saying, "AMEN! PRAISE THE LORD! HALLELUJAH! AMEN! GLORY!" and he was louder than he was the first time. The preacher looked at him and said, "What are you praising God about now? I thought I just explained to you that story." The young man said, "Wow! That means if you are right God drowned all of Pharaoh's army in ankle deep water. Praise be to God!"

Hey guys, it doesn't matter how you approach this story, it is a miracle of God! God still provides those miracles for us when we come to our Red Sea with what is pursuing us behind us, and God knows the only way is through it! He wants us to be obedient to His Word, no matter how much our enemy wants us to serve Him from where we used to be. God doesn't have you where you are so that you will be overthrown in the wilderness and die. God has you in a place where, ultimately, He can lead you through

and He WILL lead you through! He will ultimately get victory over your past, over your sin, so that ultimately others will know who He is. How can you go back? How can you tell yourself it is ok? How can we make decisions with our own best in mind instead of HIS ultimate glory in mind?

When they get to the other side, Moses raises that stick again and he drowns all of Pharaoh's army who went in the Red Sea. The Bible has a unique story here. Pharaoh's army gets in the middle of the Red Sea and they see the water on the right and the left, and suddenly they figure this thing out...they suddenly realize they are not fighting Israel; they are fighting Israel's God. The Bible says God monkeyed with the wheels on the chariot. I love that! All of a sudden, the wheels just started coming off and they were getting mired in the mud. Pharaoh's army began to reverse and retreat. They try to get out because they are trying to get away from God. Please hear me. This was not just about freeing Israel. If it was just about freeing Israel, He could have let all of Pharaoh's army go free. It was about Him getting glory over Pharaoh and his army. So when Moses raised that stick again, the waters came back in and drowned all of the army.

Then, the story closes with this thought, "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses." You do understand this, right. Before God got you to where He now has you, if you are in the land of promise and you are being used of Him to bring honor and glory to Him, God planned your route to ultimately get you to have a healthy fear instead of an unhealthy fear. Instead of fearing Satan, instead of fearing sin, instead of fearing your past, God designed your route to bring you personally to a place to where you move fear from the world to a true fear, and that is a fear of Him and awe of who He is, a holy respect for who He is. That is the reason the Lord let you see the salvation of Him. It is so you would know who He is. When you know who He is, as a believer it brings you to great faith in Him, not just great faith in Him, but great faith in His servant, Moses. Wow! It is amazing how, when you view God the way you are supposed to view Him,

you view those God has brought into your life who are your spiritual leaders and your spiritual helpers. Why? It is because ultimately God wants you to face what is in front of you so He can get glory of what is behind you so that those around you will know who He is.