

Zoom Bible Study

led by Mary Lowman

Growing Closer to God

The life of Moses

March 12, 2024

Exodus 14:1 - 4

Then the LORD said to Moses, ²“Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. ³Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.’ ⁴And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” So the Israelites did this.

Even after the horror of the death of the firstborn, the change in Pharaoh’s heart was only temporary.

What was God’s purpose in putting his people in this tight place?

Why do you think God—again and again throughout the Old Testament—is determined that he will get the glory?

Exodus 14: 5 – 9

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!” ⁶So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. ⁷He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. ⁸The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. ⁹The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

Israel numbered somewhere around two million, but Pharaoh comes after them with 600 chosen chariots plus all the other chariots, plus his huge army. And it was easy for them to trap the Israelites where God had sent them to encamp.

Pharaoh had the best military resources. Chariots were the most sophisticated military technology available at that time. Israel had nothing except that the children of Israel went out with boldness.



How could Pharaoh so quickly put aside the terrors of the last awful plague when all the firstborn were slaughtered? Pharaoh seems to forget quickly and conveniently who he is dealing with. It’s not the people of Israel that he is against, it is the God of Israel.

What are you up against right now? Who is opposing you?

Exodus 14:14: *"The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."*

Deuteronomy 3:22: *"Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you."*

Jeremiah 1:19: *"They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.*

Exodus 14:10 – 18

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹They 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? ¹²Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

¹³Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

¹⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

Notice how quickly the people of God are frightened; how quickly their faith is tested, and they fail the test. Suddenly the hardships of the Egyptian bondage were forgotten.

From Pastor Lutzer:

"No matter how terrible the bondage was, the fear of trying to get free is even more terrifying. Pharaoh never lets his servants go without a struggle. You may be a victim in Egypt, but even that may seem better than trying to be a free man in Canaan. When you serve the devil, you are exempt from some conflicts because you are in league with him. When you take the time to reflect, you realize that serving Satan is a no-win situation. He keeps demanding more while he pays you less; . . . Take a step from under his control and he flies into a rage."

If you were Moses, how would you have reacted to this? Notice how he answered the people's hasty accusation with three directives to meet this emergency:

1. Do not be afraid; fear not
2. Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord.
 - Despair will cast you down, keeping you from standing.
 - Fear will tell you to retreat.
 - Impatience will tell you to do something now.
 - Presumption will tell you to jump into the Red Sea before it is parted.

Sometimes it is the little things – the things we think we can do in our own strength – that get us down, not the big things that we know only God can do.

What are the "little things" in your life that you keep thinking you can handle instead of allowing the Lord to handle them for you?

3. Then God tells Moses: "Stop talking and move".

"There is a time for praying, but there is also a time for holy activity. Prayer is adapted for almost every season, yet not prayer alone, for there comes, every now and then, a time when even prayer must take a secondary place." (Spurgeon)

Exodus 14:19 – 25

Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

²³ The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. ²⁴ During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. ²⁵ He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Notice that the angel of the Lord who had been going before them moved and now went behind them, as well as the pillar of cloud. This illustrates the double nature of the glory of God in salvation and judgment.

Exodus 14:26 – 31

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." ²⁷ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. ²⁸ The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

²⁹ But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰ That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹ And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

There is no natural explanation for this miracle. This is a God-thing and there is no other explanation.

What is amazing is that the Egyptians went in after them. They go right in, so desperate were they to pursue their enemy and re-capture them. God knew they would do this and it was a trap.

God gave Moses a promise - verse 17: *I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them.* This was God's plan, not Moses's plan.

All of this is happening while the people of God are moving across on dry ground.

Psalms 77:16 – 20:

The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. ¹⁷ The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. ¹⁸ Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. ¹⁹ Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. ²⁰ You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

God was again answering Pharaoh's question from Exodus 5:2: *"Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"* God used the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea to speak to Egypt as much as he used it to speak to Israel.

The deliverance at the Red Sea became a turning point in Israel's history. In this era of Israel's history, they had many troubles ahead, but Pharaoh and the Egyptians never troubled them again.

Summary

Notice how the deliverance of Passover and the miracle of the Red Sea go together. In the same way, the redemption of the cross would mean nothing without the miracle of the resurrection. The two works of deliverance must go hand in hand.

1 Corinthians 15:13 – 14: *If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.*

Romans 8:31 – 37: What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.