

Exodus 14-15 - “When There Seems To Be No Way”

So in our last study we saw the deliverance and redemption by the Lord for His people Israel out of Egypt. It's a great picture of our own salvation and deliverance from sin and this world. But now the real adventure begins. God didn't just deliver them and plop them into their new home. Nope, the journey is just beginning. We too, though we have been saved, are on a journey. It's a journey to grow us, test us, and teach us to be living by faith in God. So for the next few studies in Exodus we're going to be on a journey with this upstart nation Israel. We'll see lessons and applications for us in their various camping stops and the experiences they will have along the way as God prepares to bring them into the Promised Land.

[Read Exodus 13:17-22]

- They left from Succoth, which means 'tents' or 'booths'. They were getting ready to be on a journey; a pilgrimage.
- Their next stop was Etham which means 'with them; their strength'. Though it wasn't going to be an easy journey, God was going to be with them and help them. This is so clearly seen in verses 21-22.

14:1-4 - Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. ³ For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ ⁴ Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

God is bringing Israel to a very interesting situation here. They're going to find their next camping spot (or lesson) at **Pi Hahiroth**. This is going to bring them to the Red Sea in front of them and mountains on either side of them, with Pharaoh's army coming up behind them. It's going to bring them to a seeming dead end.

Notice what Pharaoh is saying in vs. 3: **They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.** Pharaoh thinks they're trapped. Israel I'm sure felt trapped with no way out!

- It's interesting that **Pi Hahiroth** means “the mouth” or “where weeds grow”.
- You see it's in these times where we can feel like the world is caving in around us. We can feel like nothing is going our way and we can easily begin to question God.

- Perhaps we begin to ‘mouth off’ a little and let weeds of anger and bitterness begin to grow.

But the Lord had a great plan in all of this. And the reality is shocking. It’s not about you, it’s about Him!

What does God say? He’s doing a work to **gain honor over Pharaoh**. This circumstance and situation is happening so that others may know that Yahweh is indeed the Lord – He alone is God!

- So though you may feel boxed in, trapped, and may be ready to mouth off, remember, God is in control and He will use you to do a work beyond what you can see.
- Our lives aren’t meant to be lived in comfort for ourselves. We’ve been saved so that our lives can be lived for the glory of God – to make Him known!
- In whatever situation or circumstance you may find yourself in, look for what God wants to accomplish through it for His praise. The very reason you may be in that seemingly difficult position may just be to let God act in a way that is beyond you and for His glory.

14:5-8 - Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”⁶ So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.⁷ Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them.⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

Pharaoh assembles a pretty formidable army. 600 choice chariots plus all the chariots of Egypt. Not sure how many that is, but this would have been like an army of tanks in the eyes of the Israelites.

What did Israel have? A bunch of walking sticks and unleavened bread. A bit of a mismatch. But here’s what they did have on their side, a mighty God!

- Satan is a formidable foe. Sometimes we may wonder how we can ever stand against him. But we have the Lord on our side.
- **1 John 4:4**, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”
- We don’t fight in ourselves or for ourselves. We fight through the Lord and for the Lord.

When you know you are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37) – go out with boldness as these children of Israel did.

14:9-12 - *So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon. ¹⁰ And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? ¹² Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.”*

Now as Pharaoh’s army begins to make their presence known, the boldness of the Israelites suddenly turned to worry. They lifted their eyes and saw the Egyptians bearing down on them and this rejoicing turned to regret, their faith depleted in fear.

It says the Israelites ***lifted their eyes*** (vs. 10) and saw the Egyptians coming. What they should have done is lifted their eyes a little higher to see what God could do.

- It’s a sad thing that not only did Pharaoh and the Egyptians quickly forget the God of miracles, but the Israelites forgot the miracles of their God. And God never runs out of miracles or power.
- How quick they forgot about their God and focused on their doom.
- They weren’t even a week out of Egypt and already they’re distorting the past.

14:13-14 - *And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”*

Moses responded in great faith and in a way we need to learn:

- 1) Fear not! (**2 Timothy 4:7**, “*But God has not given us a spirit of fear...*”)
- 2) Stand still. Don’t try to strategize or figure a way out of that predicament. Let God do His thing.

- 3) See the salvation of the Lord. Be confident that God will save you. Don't dwell on the armies or struggles coming at you; dwell on the One who is fighting for you (vs. 14).

Elisha was an individual who knew the advantage of having the Lord on his side. In 2 Kings 6 the King of Syria was making war with the Israelites and sought to have Elisha captured. We read in **2 Kings 6:14–17**, *"Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'" ¹⁶ So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."*

14:15 - And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward."

Moses had wisely told the people to stand still. That didn't mean they weren't to do anything. It meant they weren't to act in their own resources to try and fix their situation. They were to look for how God was going to direct them.

Now that direction is coming – **go forward**.

- "There is a time for prayer, but there is also a time for action; and Moses, it's time to move. Not time to pray now, it's time to get moving. And there always comes that time, when it's time to move. We need to precede our moves with prayer, we need to have the guidance of the Lord through prayer; but there comes times when our prayers must take feet, we begin to move." (Chuck Smith)
- Illustration of man stuck on his roof during a flood.

14:16-18 - But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. ¹⁷ And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

The rod that has been this instrument of bringing the plagues upon Egypt will be the instrument by which God will bring about one of the most well known miracles of the Bible.

- Now this is a big ask of Moses. He very well could have wondered how in the world lifting up his rod and stretching out his hand will help them cross the Red Sea. How can $A+B = C$, a divided Sea no less.
- He could have looked to spare himself any embarrassment and not do this. But Moses knows to trust the Lord. God is at work.

Moses is beginning to realize this is not about him, it's about God. It's a lesson that we struggle to comprehend, but when we do, life takes on greater purpose and joy. Because we begin to see that every trial is an opportunity for God to gain honor in the way He works in us and through us.

- God will allow us to be boxed in at times so that our only course of action is to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. And when the world sees it, they know it's not of us, and must be of God. It's all for His honor and glory!

14:19-20 - *And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. ²⁰ So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.*

Here's the pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. A Christophany. He was leading them but is now protecting them. He's not only their advance guard He's also their rear guard.

- Jesus does the same for us. He will cause the enemy to be in darkness, but will give light to His people and will lead them and protect them.

This action gave time for the Israelites to move through the waters of the Red Sea at night and provide enough distance and separation from the Egyptians.

- Keep in mind, this is about 2 million people. You know how hard it is to get your family just out of the house and into the mini-van. Could you imagine trying to organize a crossing of 2 million people?
- But God is with them and is taking care of them.

14:21-25 - *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made*

the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. ²⁵ And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

The Lord rolled back the waters in a miraculous way. Probably the pinnacle of miracles in the Old Testament. And the fact that the Israelites walked into the ***midst of the sea on dry ground***. That's pretty awesome!

But Pharaoh and the Egyptians were not happy about this. They pursue them into the sea and once again the Lord acts on Israel's behalf – just as Moses said: *The Lord will fight for you* (vs. 14).

- God loosens the lug nuts and the wheels of their chariots all come off. It was done in such a way that they all understood this was the Lord doing so.
- This is exactly what God had in mind, that they might know that He is the Lord!

Notice something, Israel had a large obstacle in front of them, but God didn't remove it, He led them through it. And He led them through it safely.

- God does the same for us. We so often want Him to remove the obstacles and difficulties in our life, and we sometimes remain still until it's gone. But God's plans are often to take us through the storms and trials of life so we can see His power and strength demonstrated all the more.
- It requires faith and trust, but it's an amazing experience to see Him at work!
- Thinks of these huge water walls that the children of Israel are walking in between. They had to trust that these were going to hold long enough for them to pass. But what a rush to see God do exactly that.

14:26-31 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." ²⁷ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in

the midst of the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. ²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

There are those that try and discredit the miracle of the Red Sea crossing.

- Some say it's not recorded in Egyptian history. It was however common not to record any of their defeats. And this was one huge defeat.
- Some say this was more or less just a natural occurrence. That as the winds began to blow and the changing tides, you could cross in shallow water. But this doesn't explain the wall of water on both sides of them.
- Some say there is an area of the Red Sea that is very shallow and marshy. In fact they call it the Reed Sea because of this condition, and they'll say it's very acceptable to cross over in this area. But this doesn't explain how the Word of God says they crossed over on dry ground.
- Now let's say we give the critics this last argument. That Israel was able to cross over in a shallow unthreatening area of the Red Sea. Then it just furthers the power and miracle of God by drowning the whole Egyptian army in knee deep water. Either way, we have a miracle here!

Better to take the Word of God at face value and believe what it says.

The chapter ends with the people fearing the Lord and believing the Lord and Moses. We must never let our happy times dictate our faith and joy in the Lord. It needs to be rather a simple stance in doctrine knowing that the Lord is faithful, that He will deliver us, and He will provide for us. This needs to be our belief in any circumstance.

- We will see in the next chapters that the Israelites will quickly change their tune when things begin to get tight again. But when we go through stretching times, we are still serving the same God who is able to come through for us, and has promised that He will. May our faith and fear of the Lord stay constant despite the tight times we endure, for the Lord's goodness is constant.

The Passover picture for us redemption and deliverance through the blood of the Lamb (Romans 4-5). This chapter now pictures for us that baptism experience where we see new life in Christ. We've laid the old nature down and we now identify with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. New life (Romans 6-8)!

When we come to know the greatness of God and the life He has given us, it should cause us to sing! This is what we see in the next chapter.

15:1-2 - *Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! ² The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him.*

Here we have the first worship song in the Bible. It's one that many songs in the Bible will be patterned after. This song is all about the deliverance of God. It's not a song being written over the fleeting emotion of a moment, it's a song that speaks of the work God has completed.

The last song we see in the Bible (Revelation 15) is also a song of deliverance.

- We always have a reason to sing, regardless of your circumstances, because of all that God has already done for you.

Notice the key principle of worship – the Lord! ***I will sing to the Lord***. He's the object of our devotion and praise. Worship is not unto man or for ourselves, but it's to be directed to the Lord. He's our audience in worship.

- The Lord is mentioned some 45 times in this song.

The Lord is my strength and my song... When we realize that we are insufficient in ourselves, and the Lord alone is our strength, He will be our song. He will be the reason we sing and rejoice. Our strength will disappoint and fail us, but His strength never will.

- **2 Corinthians 12:9**, "And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

15:3-5 - *The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name. ⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. ⁵ The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone.*

Many will read a passage like this and conclude that God is just an angry God looking to punish people. Yet evil is never good. And what we see is God simply bringing an end to that which is evil.

- God isn't a complacent God. He's not inactive. The Lord is a man of war. Sadly the world questions God's existence because of evil in the world. Yet when evil is punished they blame God for being too harsh.

15:6-10 - “Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. ⁷ And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble. ⁸ And with the blast of Your nostrils The waters were gathered together; The floods stood upright like a heap; The depths congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.’ ¹⁰ You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

The enemy loves to threaten and cause panic and fear in our lives. We need to focus on God's power rather than the enemies plotting.

Isaiah 54:17a, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper...”

Whatever the enemy tries to throw at you, just know that it is nothing to the Lord. Trust in the Lord; depend on Him and your worries and fears will quickly sink away.

15:11-17 - “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? ¹² You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them. ¹³ You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation. ¹⁴ “The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, Trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. ¹⁶ Fear and dread will fall on them; By the greatness of Your arm They will be as still as a stone, Till Your people pass over, O Lord, Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased. ¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance, In the place, O Lord, which You have made

For Your own dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

Pharoah had asked 'Who is the Lord?' (5:2). Israel knew full well and they sang ***Who is like You, O Lord.*** There is none greater than the Lord.

The people will hear and be afraid... (vs. 14). This is exactly what Rahab spoke of in Jericho.

Joshua 2:9–11, *"and said to the men: 'I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.'"*

Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased... (vs. 16). Moses knew that they were God's purchased possession, and He would take care of them.

- When you pay a hefty price for something, you protect it.
- We too have been purchased at a great cost. We're His. Because of that the Lord is going to protect us and hold on to us until we have passed over.
- **John 10:27–29**, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."*

15:18-19 - *"The Lord shall reign forever and ever." ¹⁹ For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.*

Nothing is going to stop God from being God. We can and should praise Him always because His reign is ***forever and ever.***

15:20-21 - *Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹ And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"*

Miriam began to lead the other ladies in song and put together a little choreographed dance number. Notice Miriam is repeating what Moses sang earlier. She apparently wasn't paying too much attention as she only gets one stanza in and then stops.

- It's important that men lead in spiritual matters. A family needs a spiritual father and husband to set the example in this way.

It's great that this nation turned to song when they were led through the Sea. But it would have been even more amazing to sing when they came to the Sea. If we can learn to be worshippers in any situation we'll find ourselves experiencing greater joy in the midst of life's challenges.

- Don't wait for perfect circumstances to worship. Worship and you'll find your circumstances improving.
- Illustration: Paul and Silas in a Philippian jail – Acts 16:20-26.

15:22-24 - *So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³ Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. ²⁴ And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"*

They had just seen a mighty miracle at the Red Sea, they just had finished a great worship service, and now after 3 days they're complaining. Amazing! God led them through this bitter time to really reveal what was in their hearts. Marah means "bitter".

- We too will go through bitter times: sickness, heartache, death. It will reveal to us what's inside. We can either respond with grumbling or with grace.
- We live in a fallen world where disappointment is inevitable.

But notice what Moses was instructed to do...

15:25-26 - *So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, ²⁶ and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."*

Moses was instructed to throw a tree into the waters and when he did, they were made sweet. A great picture of the work of the cross.

You see, Jesus came to the cross to redeem that which was lost, that which was corrupt.

- We can act a lot like these Israelites. We rejoice and sing when everything's going smoothly, but complain and grumble when things don't go so smoothly.
- That's why we need to take everything to the cross and realize, I don't deserve anything but death. But Jesus took my place that I might have life! What right do I have to complain? He's paid the price, my life is not mine. And when we look to the cross, things seem to get sweet again.

If life were sweet all the time, we would have no desire for the Lord and heaven. Those bitter experience cause us to long for things eternal, and the cross reminds us that we have that hope through Him!

The Lord who heals you... Jehovah-Raphah

15:27 - *Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.*

God is so good. After the bitter experiences life can throw at us, He brings us to times of refreshing. This place was an oasis! Wells of water and palm trees.

- Reminds me of Murietta.
- God wants us to experience those times of refreshing and revitalization. It comes when we wait upon Him. Take time to relax in the Lord.