

God Goes With His People in Salvation

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Exodus: Redeemer and Redeemed / Exodus 13:17–14:31

Discussion Questions

1. The sermon highlights how God orchestrated the Israelites' journey, taking them the long way to demonstrate His power and faithfulness. Can you share a testimony from your own life where God led you on a path that seemed harder or longer but ultimately proved beneficial? How did these experiences shape your faith?
 2. We often struggle with assurance of salvation because we write ourselves as the primary agents in our salvation story. How does understanding that God is the start, middle, and end of our salvation change your perspective? Share how you can apply this understanding to daily life.
 3. In the face of trials, the Israelites responded with sarcasm and anger. Reflect on your typical responses to difficult situations. How can you cultivate a more faithful and trusting response, recognizing that God is in control?
 4. The sermon emphasizes that God's salvation subverts pride and boasting. How can you actively shift the focus from your efforts to God's work in your testimonies and daily conversations? Feel free to even practice sharing the gospel this way with a community group member.
 5. Moses instructed the Israelites to "fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord." What areas of your life require you to stand firm in faith right now? How can the group pray for you?
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Introduction

How a nation defines its origins tells you a lot about its trajectory.

We need to get a proper origin story for our own salvation.

Getting the beginning right is absolutely critical to understanding both the middle and seeing the end.

Textual Idea

Moses wanted the Hebrews to see that God was the start, middle, and end of their salvation out of Egypt.

Sermon Idea

My goal today is to show you from this text the exact same: God is the start, middle, and end of your salvation.

Interrogative

So your job today is to think about how you write your origin story: if it starts with you, let me invite you to reconsider in light of our text today.

Salvation is orchestrated by God (13:17-22).

This is the big moment—and Exodus 13:17-14:31 recounts how Israel’s servitude in Egypt ended and the nation’s liberation to serve Yahweh.

Our first section here sets the scene of the climax of the Exodus—the Crossing the Red Sea.

Taking the Long Way

When the people are on their way to the land promised to Abraham, they did not take the most direct route on the *Via Maris*, a highway so ancient it predates its Latin name and hugs the Mediterranean coast.

God turns the people off the *Via Maris* and takes them to the way of the wilderness, south into the Sinai peninsula. He has them take the long way.

And this is a **divine accommodation for their own weakness**, having just left Egypt. In literally eight weeks from this moment, the Hebrews are going to fight the Amalekites (Ex 17).

God is sensitive to the extent of what his people can bear, and he will only have them walk through a trial to the degree that it is working out a good for them.

Moreover, God is going to also take them on the *harder path*. They will literally walk through divinely divided water—objectively more difficult than battling the Philistines.

I’m convinced that God has them take the harder path—so that he can do two things—conclusively demonstrate his power of Pharaoh and also prove to the Israelites that it was not by their might they left the land. Otherwise, they might trust their own sword instead of the Lord.

Historic Claims for Your Own Good

The other thing that stands out is Joseph’s faith that the people would one day return to the land promised to Abraham.

You might wonder about why bones were taken. All the way back in Genesis 50, Joseph makes his posterity promise to take his bones back to the promised land.

We tend not to think much about this, but it weds all that we’ve been studying: God brought the people in Egypt to do this very exodus. He superintended all it, and Joseph knew that the Lord would one day bring the Israelites back to the Promised Land.

And, this really did happen. I’ll spend next week, when we talk about Exodus 15, giving reasons I believe this historical event truly happened, but let me make a comment here: one of the reasons you can trust your Bibles is that it names real places in human history. We’ve lost the location of some of these places, which is why people aren’t exactly sure the route of the Exodus. But we can put shovels in the ground in Goshen and find evidence of Hebrews. And we know those Hebrew people eventually left.

God’s Presence with His People

We see Yahweh’s own presence with his people here, leaving Egypt. Both fire and cloud. Both of these motifs play a prominent role in other parts of Exodus, particularly on the mountain, but we’ve already seen fire in Exodus—at the bush!

Peter Gentry> shady mist of a cloud in the hot day and warmth and light of a fire on a cold desert night.

Do You See Anyone Else's Orchestration?

Was it you who sought out the first person who told you about Jesus Christ? Or did God send one of his people to tell you? Was it you who guided you through the wilderness of your own life? Was it you who planned to take you through the harder, longer path—only to realize on the other side that the shorter, direct path would have demoralized you?

The late Tim Keller said something I think about a lot. He said, “God will either give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything he knew.” The Hebrews asked to leave—and God took them the way they would have asked for if they knew what he knew.

So how could any of us boast about our own work in salvation?

Salvation subverts pride & boasting

The turn south has an unexpected opportunity for the Egyptians, which God exploits: Pharaoh sees the turn and wants to capitalize on what he sees as a strategic blunder, believing the Israelites are confused.

Pharaoh takes God’s bait and pursues (v. 6-10).

When Pharaoh marshals a corp of chariots, he’s committed to destroying the Israelites.

This is a dramatic, strategic blunder. We’ve seen ten evidences that the Lord *wills* for his people to leave Egypt, but Pharaoh is so blinded by pride that he pursues God’s people—ultimately into the abyss.

For their own part, the Israelites do not respond in faith, but in sarcasm and anger ([Ex 14:10-13](#)).

And yet, God is faithful to his promise and his election of them is sure because it’s unconditional. *He still saves them from themselves in spite of themselves.*

Exodus 14:15–22 ESV

¹⁵ The LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.” ¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. ²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

But the Israelites are not the only ones who enter this dry ground. Pharaoh, so blinded by pride, sends his commanders in pursuit.

Exodus 14:23–31 ESV

²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.” ²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not

one of them remained.²⁹ But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.³¹ 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.

God's salvation subverts boasting because the people may have walked out of Egypt on their own sandals, but they were carried along by Yahweh himself. He took them the long and hard way so that he could 1) demonstrate His faithfulness towards him, 2) end the threat Egypt posed to his people.

Christian, you are where you are and have the assurance to stand precisely because you did nothing but walk a path opened for you and defended on all sides by God Almighty.

Do Not Fear; Stand Firm.

One of the things that we learn from this passage is that the enemies of God's people will pursue his people with the intent to kill them. This will happen to the Israelites later in Canaan; and it will happen to the disciples by the Romans. The world, so blinded by pride will try to annihilate God's ambassadors.

Some have named June "Pride Month," and the lessons of this chapter are just as relevant to us as

- The world hates God's people.
- The world will stop at nothing to destroy God's people.
- God's people will see the chariots and likely respond in identical ways: anger, sarcasm, and a general lack of faith.
- Yet, just like in this chapter, we can see that their efforts to destroy God's people will ultimately lead to their own destruction.

We should not long for this. We should plead with the Lord that this would not happen. But we do not need to fear being pushed into the sea. God's people have walked through waters as on dry ground before, and God can do it again.

Moses's words are just as relevant to us today as they were then.

Exodus 14:13–14 ESV

¹³ 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.¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

What makes the salvation special in Exodus is two final features.

Salvation is supernatural

The Israelites are as good as dead. And they know it is why they ask Moses about graves and dying in the wilderness. That they live is by supernatural intervention.

Moses tells us that a strong wind parted the sea. This detail matters, because sometimes garbage documentaries will try to suggest that a receding tide facilitated the crossing the sea.

Guys, that is a really dumb suggestion: Pharaoh would have known about undulations and tides and known that the Israelites could have eventually crossed on dry grounds if the tides were right.

The whole point of this moment is to show the Israelites that they were as good as dead but God brought them to life by having them cross through the waters.

- › And so are you apart from Christ. Gospel presentation.

Salvation is by grace alone.

There is no question or contest in Exodus about who really wins the day here.

The Lord gets the credit here. He did all of it. So, the origin story of the nation of Israel is that the Lord brought the people out of Egypt. He sent them in there, preparing a place for them to shelter from a famine, and he brought them out.

If Redeemer's stories ever begin with "We" instead of "He," at best, we've had a momentary lapse of judgement or at worst we've lost the gospel.

But in our own lives, If our testimonies—our origin stories—ever start with "I." We're off to a bad start, unless its: "I was a wreck, in a tough spot with no where else to go. As good as dead. But God..."

Conclusion

God is the start, middle, and end of your salvation. He orchestrated every turn in your life, even allowing you to be pursued unto death so that he would bring you out on the other side and save you.

Today, reflect on how you write your origin story: if it starts with "I," let me invite you to reconsider in light of our text today.

Your assurance of salvation is grow to the same degree that you acknowledge the gentle, pastoral guidance and presence of Christ; the power of his deliverance; and his strong sustaining hand.

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