

Place: Lurgan Baptist 29:11:2005

Reading: Exodus 14:1-14

FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

6. IN A CUL DE SAC

Gladys Aylward missionary to China more than fifty years ago was forced to flee from the Japanese invaded Yangcheng. But she could not leave her work behind. With only one assistant she led more than a hundred orphans over the mountains toward free China. The book, “*The Hidden Price of Greatness*,” tells us what happened. During Gladys harrowing journey of out of war torn Yangcheng she grappled with despair as never before. After passing a sleepless night, she morning with no hope of reaching safety. A thirteen year old girl reminded her of their much loved story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. “*But I am not Moses*,” Gladys cried in desperation. Do you how the girl replied ? She said “*But Jehovah is still God*.” When Gladys and the orphans made it through they proved once again, that no matter how inadequate we feel, God is still God and we can trust in Him. The Red Sea mat roll before us, the desert may entrap us, the enemy may press on our heels. The past may seem implausible, and the future impossible, but God works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way of escape for His weary, but waiting children. You see God knows how to balance our lives so that we have sunshine and rain, calm and storm, laughter and tears. In God's school there are level places that delight us, and there are difficult places that challenge us. Even on the paths of God's choosing there are rocks and bumps and we have to learn to accept them and benefit from them. The bumps are what you climb on. God uses this method to educate us spiritually. For it was none other than God Himself that brought Israel into this present predicament. C.H. Mackintosh says, “*The sea was before them, Pharaoh's hosts behind them, and the mountains around them. And all this, be it observed, permitted and ordered of God.*”

Can you see where they are ? Before them breaks the thunder of the angry sea, on either side of them rise unassailable mountains, in hot pursuit come Pharaoh and his hosts.

They are completely hemmed in, they are at their wits end, escape seems impossible. But in the place of distress God miraculously and mercifully delivered them from the hand of the enemy. The psalmist says, “*Come and see the works of God: He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into*

dry land, they went through the flood on foot, there did we rejoice in Him.” (Ps 66:5-6) Now this we want to respond to the invitation of the psalmist and examine the historical account given to us here in (Exod 14) In so doing we shall better understand God's discipline, and we shall be led to the place where we shall be able to say, “ **there,**” in the place of distress, “ *did we rejoice in Him.* ” Now I want you to notice,

(1) THE SITUATION OF THE PEOPLE

Look at (14:1-2) The names of these places are interesting. “ *Pi-hahiroth,*” for instance means “ *The Place of Liberty,*” and such it proved to be for it was here that Israel were finally delivered from those who had long held them in cruel bondage. “ *Migdol,*” signifies “ *a tower,*” or “ *fortress,*” and the Lord was such to His defenceless people.

“ *Baal-zephon,*” means “ *Lord of the North,*” and in Scripture the “ *north,*” is frequently associated with judgment. (Jos 8:11 Isa 14:31 Eze 1:4) And it was as the Lord of Judgement that Jehovah was seen at the Red Sea. Now the important thing for us to notice here is that Israel was brought into this present predicament by God Himself. “ *Between Migdol and the sea,*” (14:2) was the very place where God wanted His people to be.

My we must never expect the path of faith to be an easy or smooth one. Our faith must be tested and tested severely. Why ? That we may **learn the sufficiency of our God.** That we may prove from experience that He is able to supply our every need (Phil 4:19) make a way of escape from every temptation, (1 Cor 10:13) and do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think ! (1) Now look at their situation,

(a) OUTWARDLY:

They found themselves in a critical situation. Three enemies surrounded them at the same time and its difficult to say which of them was the most cruel. Pharaoh (14:9) the sea, (14:2) or the inaccessible rocks and wilderness, (14:3) Before them breaks the thunder of the angry sea, beside them rise unassailable mountains, behind them come Pharaoh and his hosts.

You see, Satan will not give us up without a fight, as the Israelites quickly discovered. Look at (14:10) What the Israelites saw was the world's most powerful army, supported by the world's most advanced military technology the chariot. In order to capture his runaway slaves Pharaoh quickly mobilized his forces and deployed his best battalion. They were in hot pursuit, and riding on

horseback, they soon came within easy striking distance. Here are the children of Israel, completely hemmed in, they are at their wits end, escape seems impossible.

Every outlet was closed they were in a cul-de-sac with no way out. My are you in the place of distress this ? On their first wedding anniversary on the 18th August, 1938 Russell and Darlene Deibler arrived in New Guinea to labour in the jungles for Christ. When the Japanese invaded the East Indies, the two were torn apart and Russell was interned in a concentration camp where he died. Darlene was imprisoned in another military camp where she suffered years of forced labour, indignity, and at times was near starvation. One day she was singled out for execution. Troops took her to a death camp and directed her toward a stark cell. These words were written on the door in chalk, "*this person must die.*" The guards shoved her in the cell, and as the door slammed shut, Darlene fell on her knees to peer through the keyhole. When she saw the key make a complete revolution, she knew she was as good as dead. As the footsteps of the guard receded, she fell backward in a cold sweat, trembling, fighting off sheer terror. Just as she then she found herself singing a hymn she had learned as a child in Sunday School in Iowa, U.S.A.

*" Fear not little flock whatever your lot.
He enters all rooms, the doors being shut
He never forsakes, He never is gone
So count on His presence, in darkness and dawn."*

Darlene was in an impossible spot, but she was there with a God who does impossible feats. She was there in His will, and she knew the will of God would never lead her here, where the grace of God could not keep her. That assurance bore her through impossible times and preserved her life despite impossible odds. My do you feel hemmed in on every side ? Do you feel that there is no way through your present circumstances ?

*" Have you come to the Rea Sea place in your life,
Where in spite of all you can do:
There is no way out: there is no way back
There is no other way but through.*

*Then wait on the Lord with a trust serene
Till the night of your fear is gone
He will send the winds: He will heap the floods
When He says to your soul go on."*

Annie Johnson Flint, quoted by Dr. Ted Rendall in his book "IN GOD'S SCHOOL"

(b) INWARDLY:

Look if you will at (14:10) This describes the people's reaction to Pharaoh's pursuit. How forgetful they were. What short memories they had. They seem to have forgotten all the recent displays of God's power exercised on their behalf. My here were a people who had seen the gods of Egypt judged, (12:12) the power of Egypt broken, they had witnessed God's wonders, the plagues all ten of them. Not to mention the fact that they had escaped from Egypt only the night before. The Scripture says that they had marched out boldly (14:8) meaning confidently, even defiantly. Yet at the first sign of danger they panicked. (13:9) When clouds appear on their horizon, when fresh difficulties arise, all these things are forgotten, and their hearts fail for fear. They left God out of their equation. *They interpreted God in the presence of difficulty, instead of the difficulty in the presence of God.* Do you know the experience ? My no matter how many times the Lord has delivered us in the past, no matter how wonderfully His power has been seen acting for us when some new trial comes upon us we forget God's previous interventions. We are overwhelmed by the greatness of our present emergency. Is Israel's mistake not ours ? We leave the Lord out of our calculations and the result ? Fear grips our hearts ! Ann Landers of the USA has written an advice column for over 30 years. She reports that she receives over 10,000 letters a week, with more mail concerning one particular difficulty than any other. Do you know what it is ? **Fear.**

Phobia is the Greek word for fear. The dictionary lists over 700 different kinds of phobias. Acrophobia is a fear of high places, claustrophobia is a fear of tight, closed places, agoraphobia is a fear of open places and crowds, ergophobia is a fear of work, many are in that category, and phobophobia is a fear of fear. My like Israel are you fearful ? Are you fearful of the adversary around you ? What about the inadequacy within you ? Maybe its the uncertainty before you ? Do you know what fear does ? It freezes and immobilises us ! (Jn 20:19)

I heard of a man whose farm was failing, whose wife needed surgery, whose bills were past due, and the banks would not lend him a pound. He decided that all he could do was rob a bank. He tried to gain enough courage. He paced back and forth around the bank. He had a bag for the cashier to put the money in and a gun with which to frighten him or her. He was literally scared to death and tried to talk

himself out of the escapade. Shakily, the farmer shoved the gun at the cashier, instead of the bag. Then he pointed the floppy bag at the cashier and stammered, “*Don't stick with me this is a mess up.*”

My this is what fear will do for you. Here were Israel on the edge of the Red Sea paralysed with fear. Their eyes were on the Egyptians and the result they “*were sore afraid.*” (14:10) Is this where you are this ? Have you got your eye on the enemy instead of on the Lord ? Do you recall Peter ? “*Lord if it be Thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*” (Matt 14:28) My it was “*when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid.*” Is the eye of your faith on the circumstances instead of on the Lord ? You see the only cure for fear is for the eye to remain steadfastly fixed on the Lord. (1) Here were the people of God in a great dilemma *outwardly they were in great danger, inwardly they were in great distress* but Moses stands forth and says, “*Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.*” (14:13) Now that is,

(2) THE SALUTATION OF THE LEADER

Moses was a man who remained calm in the midst of this dilemma, a man who remained confident in the midst of this danger. In calm dignity and with majestic faith he stands forth and says, “*Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord for ever.*” (14:13) Are you beginning to see now the value and fruits of those forty years of training in the desert ? The people panicked but Moses remained calm.

(a) “*FEAR NOT,*” That was a Word of COMFORT:

Moses wants to quieten their hearts and set them in perfect peace before God. “*Fear ye not.*” Now why were they not to fear ?

1. Because of the Promise of God:

Look at (13:5, 11) You see, the Lord’s promise to His people was that He would bring them into a new land.

(Gen 12:1, 17:8) No amount of physical force would prevent this from being fulfilled. Isn’t it great to know that we are on the victory side ? The Devil might the odd battle, but He will never win the campaign. Christ said,

“*I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” (Matt 16:18) Paul asks the question, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that*

loved us.” (Rom 8: 8:35) Listen to Jude as he bursts into song, “ *Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*” (Jude 24) Do you know something ? We’ll not be lost a long the way ! 1.

2. Because of the Presence of God:

The Lord was with them. “ *And the Lord with before them by day in a pillar a cloud.*” (13:21) And this pillar was the visible sign of God’s presence with them.

*“ When through the deep waters I call thee to go
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow
For I will be with thee, thy trials to bless,
And sanctify to thee, thy deepest distress.”*

3. Because of the Purpose of God:

For this first trial of Israel’s faith was all in the purpose and plan of God. (14:4) What is God’s great purpose in everything He does ? Is it not to display His glory ? You see, when God delivered Israel from Egypt He did it in way that guaranteed that He would receive all the credit and honour. (14:17) Now these words “ *Fear not,*” are some of the great words recurring all through the Scriptures. “ *Fear not, neither be thou dismayed,*” was His message to Joshua (Jo 8:1) “ *Fear not,*” was His command to Gideon. (Judges 16:23) “ *Fear not,*” was David’s counsel to Solomon. (1 Chron 28:20) Abraham was concerned about the **Posterity of the Nation:** When God came to him and said, “ *Fear not Abram I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.*” (Gen 15:1) Are you concerned about your family ? “ *Fear not,*” for

“ *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth you.*”

(Ps 138:8) Solomon was concerned about the **Immensity of the Task:** The work involved in building the temple was great but David said “ *Fear not for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee: He will not fail thee nor forsake thee.*” (1 Chron 28:20) Are you anxious about the erection of God’s spiritual temple ? Do you feel overawed by the greatness of the task ?

“ *Fear not.*” Christ will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The psalmist was concerned about the **Difficulty of the Way:** and then he said, “ *Yea, though I walk through the valley of deepest darkness I will fear no evil for Thou art with me.*” My are you in the valley this ? The valley of darkness, of doubt, of distress ! “ *Fear not,*” God is with you ! (a)

(b) “**STAND STILL,**” *That was a Word of COMPOSURE:*

“*Be still and know that I am God,*” said the Psalmist. (Ps 46:10) My is it not so difficult to stand still in the midst of distress ? These hearts of ours are so restless under trial and trouble seeking their own solutions, that we find difficult to “**stand still.**” In the presence of distress we must be doing something. We rush hither and thither, we want a hand in the situation. But what can we do ? Many times we cannot solve problems, heal hurts, change circumstances or win our own battles. My what could Israel do at the Red Sea ? Could they dry it up ? Could they level the mountains ? Could they annihilate the enemy ? Impossible ! They were surrounded by a wall of difficulties, but this was the very time for God to act.

*“ This cruel self oh how it strives,
And works within my breast
To come between Thee and my soul
And keep me back from rest. ”*

In the presence of distress do you wait on God ? Do you know what it is “*be still and know that He is God ?*” The people said, “*Go back,*” (14:11) Moses said, “*Stand still,*” but then God said,

(c) “**GO FORWARD,**” *That was a Word of CHALLENGE:*

Look at (14:15 Heb 11:29) We may react to distress in one of three ways. We may **Panic:** that’s what Israel did. They forgot what God had done for them in the past and give way to fear and unbelief. (14:10) We may **Pray:** that’s what Moses did. But God came to Moses and said, “*Moses the time for praying is past, and the time for acting is come.*” My it is wrong to act without praying, but it is wrong to be praying when we ought to be acting. We may panic, that's what Israel did. We may pray, that's what Moses did. Or we may **Proceed** that’s what God wanted them to do. “*Speak unto the go forward.*” (14:15) Is this God's Word to your heart this ? “**Go Forward,**” *in spite of your Reasoning’s:* Why was Israel reluctant to follow the angel of the Lord and the pillar of cloud ? Surely they reasoned this way. “*How can we go forward ? Its impossible to cross the Red Sea ? My its because of our reasoning’s so logical and so acceptable in the natural that faith is often stymied. God brings us into the place of distress in order that we may exercise faith, but we thwart His purpose by our clever reasoning’s.*

“**Go Forward,**” *in spite of your Fears:* “**Go Forward,**” *in spite of your*

Weakness: When Columbus was crossing the Atlantic, day after day, no land appeared. His sailors threatened to mutiny and tried often to persuade him to turn back. Columbus refused to listen to their entreaties and each day entered in the ships log the words, “ **Sailed on.**” Well, what happened when they moved forward ? Well notice,

(3) THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

Moses had said, “ *Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.*” (Ps 106:9-12)
That salvation and deliverance comprised three things,

(a) **THE SEA WAS DIVIDED:**

It was divided **Miraculously:** Look at (14:21) Traditionally both Jews and Christians have maintained that the Israelites crossed an arm of the Red Sea the large body of water that separates Africa from the Middle East. Philip Ryken says “ *the traditional view is that on their way to the Sinai and the south, the Israelites crossed the Gulf of Suez, the north-west arm of the Red Sea.*” You seem, our God is the God of miracles and He used a miracle to open up a way of deliverance for His people. It was divided **Instrumentally:** (14:16) tells me that God used a Wooden Rod, (14:21) tells me that God used a Weak Hand. My the impossible became possible and the sea was divided ! No matter how one looks at it, crossing the Red Sea was a miracle. Donald Bridge tells the story of a liberal minister preaching in an old Bible-believing, African-American church. At a certain point in his sermon the minister referred to the crossing of the Red Sea. “ *Praise the Lord,*” someone shouted. “ *Taking all them children through the deep waters. What a mighty miracle !*”

However, the minister did not believe in miracles. So he said, rather condescendingly, “ *It was not a miracle. They were in marsh land, the tide was ebbing, and the children of Israel picked their way across in six inches of water.*” “ *Praise the Lord,*” the man shouted again.

“ *Drowning all them Egyptians in six inches of water, what a mighty miracle.*” (a)
Like Israel does a Red Sea of trial and trouble confront you ? What about the impossible thing that now faces you ? My is the God who divided the Red Sea able to deal with your problem ? Yes ! Listen to the heartening Word of God, “ *there hath no temptation or trial taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*”
(1 Cor 10:13)

***“ Got any rivers you think are impossible.
Got any mountains you can’t tunnel through
God specialises in things thought impossible
He can do just what no other can do.”***

(b) THE ENEMY WAS DESTROYED:

Look at (14:26-28) They perished suddenly, miserably, totally. “ *There remained not so much as one of them.*”

(14:28) They sank like lead (15:10) and in the morning a ghastly mass of floating corpses was borne in upon the waves and Israel had its last look upon the Egyptians lying “ *dead upon the sea shore.*” (14:30)

And God was glorified ! (14:17) Some may think it was harsh for God to drown an entire army, but it was right and just. Pharaoh and his soldiers were cruel men bent on destroying Israel. Was it not right for God to punish evil men for killing innocent children ? Was it not appropriate for them to die by drowning because they had once tried to drown the children of Israel in the Nile ? My what happened to them at the Red Sea was divine retribution. These men to be deserved to be punished for their sins. And God is glorified when He judges people for their sins because this displays His divine attribute of justice. My there is no need that we should be hunted, and harried and hounded by the enemy, for God is able to defeat our foes. (a) (b)

(c) THE PEOPLE WERE DELIVERED:

“ *Thus the Lord saved (delivered) Israel.*” (14:30) My what could be more glorious than God saving Israel by bringing them through the Red sea ? This is one of the most amazing things God has ever done. People are still talking about it. As Nehemiah said in one of his prayers, “ *So didst Thou get Thee a name, as it is this day. And Thou didst divide the sea before them.*”

(9:10) Out from the place of distress the place of being “ *pressed together,*” God brought His people triumphantly. He who called them was faithful and delivered them out of all their troubles. But does He still ? Christin Claypool a Christian from Detroit took a missions trip to Cuba. Wanting to smuggle Spanish Bibles to a community of believers there. Christin wore several layers of clothing to conserve space in her suitcase for the Bibles. But her odd appearance drew the suspicion of security agents at every airport. Christin had to open her suitcase at her departure city, then again in the Bahamas. Arriving in Cuba, she was alarmed to again be singled out and ordered to open her suitcase. The zipper wouldn’t budge, and she could open it only about two inches. She fought with it until at

last the guard impatiently took over the struggle.

Despite prolonged effort, the zipper wouldn't budge. Christin was perplexed, for it was a new suitcase and had been opened several times before. In exasperation the guard finally shoved it toward her and told her to go on. Arriving at her hotel, Christin looked for a knife to cut open her luggage, but when she gave the zipper a tug, it opened easily. The Bibles were distributed as intended.

Cameron Thompson said, “ *we have a God who begins with the impossible and goes on from there.* ” My are you facing the impossible ? Are you experiencing hard times? What is the purpose of this discipline ? Is it not that we His children might move in the direction He wants us to go ? “ ***Speak unto the children that they go forward.*** ” (14:15).