

Where will I Go?

Exodus 14:5-14

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

“Self-esteem is that speck in the eye which most effectually mars human vision; the Great Surgeon of souls removes this from us chiefly by sanctified afflictions.”¹

Charles Spurgeon

Ever face a situation that was so difficult that endurance or escape seemed like an impossibility? You know the kind of situation that brings that crushing wave of fear that is so debilitating that one either gives up in despair, flees in any direction or worse yet impatiently tries to change it only to find out that it was as you expected; an immovable, heart breaking terror that without mercy crushes your soul! As Christians we know that living in a fallen world where chance happens to everyone means that like Job both good and bad things happen to us. While knowing of God’s promise to do good to those who love Him is of immeasurable value to those whom do not deserve mercy, when the “good” means gaining spiritual maturity at the expense of trials and tribulations ... well that can be a cross few Christians are willing to bear! While being stricken by a thousand inflictions of the mind, body and soul is it truly possible to have faith that God can move our mighty mountains of unbelief or are we as believers doomed in our weakened, sinful state to fight battles of which victory cannot be obtained? This sermon is going to review the story of the children of Israel at the Red Sea in order to show that while many battles in life cannot be won through our own effort, God is more than capable and willing to secure our victory if only we would stand still and let Him fight for us!

Facing an Impossible Situation

It is often in the greatest abundance of blessings that storms occur and do the greatest of damage! At the end of the book of Genesis the Israelite people are on the mountaintop of blessings. Their leader Joseph was second in command of all of Egypt (41:37-41) and they lived in the coveted, fertile region of Goshen (47:27).² It was here that they increased their wealth and numbers in accordance with God’s promise to their forefather Abraham to make them into a great nation (12:2-3).³ Upon Joseph’s generation passing away a new king arises in Egypt

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Direction in Dilemma,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 649–650.

² William A. Ward, [“Goshen \(Place\),”](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1076.

³ James K. Bruckner, [Exodus,](#) ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 19.

(Exodus 1:8). Not knowing the legacy of Joseph, he enslaved Israel to limit their numbers⁴ and reduce their perceived threat to Egyptian, national security.⁵ When this strategy failed to suppress Israel's numbers,



Pharaoh worked them ruthlessly (1:13) and ordered every Hebrew boy born to be thrown into the Nile river (1:22). Ironically it would be through this very order that a new leader would be found by Pharaoh's daughter, Moses, whom after meeting God at a burning bush (3:1-21) became the vessel of which Ten Plagues would hit Egypt and force Pharaoh to let God's people go (12:31)!⁶ God did these miracles not because Israel somehow deserved it but to keep His promise to

Abraham (2:24)⁷ and show Egypt and the surrounding nations His might and power!

After having lived in Egypt for approximately 430 years (12:40) Israel finally began their



journey to the Promised Land!⁸ After having figuratively plundered (12:36) and left Egypt one can almost see their dancing and hear their shouts of joy but alas their tribulations were far from over. In an unexpected twist out of God's desire to avoid a military conflict with the Philistines and so that His glory might be shown to Egypt,⁹ God led Israel "around by the desert road, towards the Red Sea."¹⁰ With the desert, sea and marshes barring the dead end trail they had taken,¹¹ God hardened and strengthened¹²

⁴ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 19.

⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, "Exodus, Book of," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 691.

⁶ Nahum M. Sarna, "Exodus, Book of," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 692.

⁷ Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 270.

⁸ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 21.

⁹ Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 269.

¹⁰ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 384.

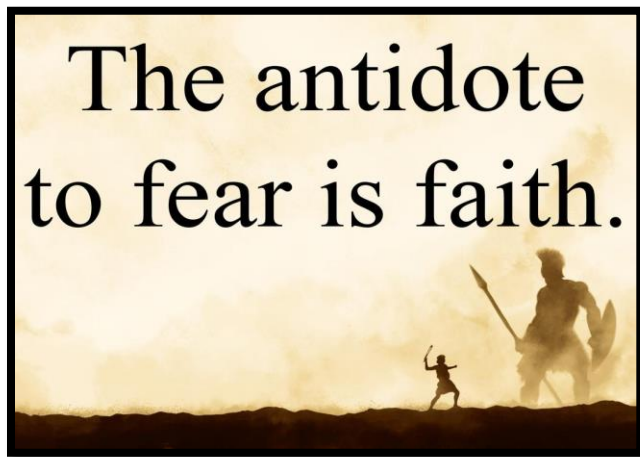
¹¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 386.

¹² James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 129.

Pharaoh's heart (14:4) to seek the return of Israel, their perceived chattel or run-away slaves. Pharaoh probably reasoned to himself: why is Israel running away (14:5) when they only asked for a three-day absence to offer sacrifices to their God (8:27)¹³ and how could Egypt ever survive without their forced, manual labor?¹⁴ So Pharaoh took a battalion¹⁵ of "his elite corps and everyone else: chariots, cavalry, and infantry,"¹⁶ and set off "filled with indignation, scorned and longing for revenge."¹⁷ Not only would these slaves not make a mockery of his generous gift of a three day "holiday," he would break their bold march (14:8) and take back their plunder and freedom! The remainder of this sermon is going to review Israel's tough situation with Egypt and in doing so suggest five ways to overcome the greatest of tribulations in life.

Step 1 in Overcoming Tough Situations: Turn Fear into Faith

When the Israelites looked back, they caught sight of the Egyptian army¹⁸ in hot pursuit



of them and they "were terrified (14:10)!" With the "Egyptians behind, the Red Sea in front, the craggy steeps of Pi-hahiroth on the right, and the fortresses of Migdol and Baal-zephon frowning on the left:¹⁹ destruction seemed imminent. Based on human reasoning this would be true had it not been for the fact that the same God who performed the Ten Plagues of Egypt was still in Israel's presence! The irony is that the very trap Egypt thought they had cunningly set for Israel was the same trap God had set for them!²⁰ The first step in overcoming that gut-wrenching feeling of

doom that often accompanies facing impossible situations like the one Israel faced, is to take fear's antidote, faith!²¹ Faith is confidence and assurance of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1). Anxiety and stress over the largest Goliath's of one's life soon dissipate the moment we remember that our Savior is sovereign and firmly in charge of all things seen and unseen

¹³ Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 271.

¹⁴ R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 126.

¹⁵ R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 126.

¹⁶ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 130.

¹⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 114.

¹⁸ Noel D. Osborn and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 335.

¹⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, "Direction in Dilemma," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 650.

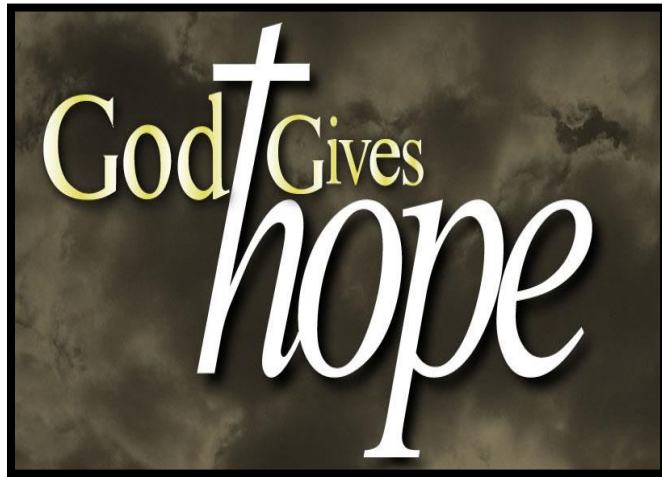
²⁰ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 130.

²¹ I could not confirm but I believe "faith is the antidote for fear" was from Russell M. Nelson.

(Colossians 1:16). While we are not promised escape from every tribulation we face, we can have great peace knowing that not only does the Devil have to flee the moment we draw nearer to God and resist him (James 4:7-8), our perseverance over difficult situations sharpens our spiritual maturity and Christlikeness (James 1:2-5)!

Step 2 in Overcoming Tough Situations: Turn Despair into Hope

Ignoring their covenant tie with God whom promised to protect them as demonstrated with the Ten Plagues of Egypt, at the first sign of trouble Israel complained against God²² and Moses and asked to be sent back as slaves of Egypt.²³



“The Hebrews were willing to return to that familiar fear of mistreatment as slaves, rather than endure the terror of God’s bid for their freedom.”²⁴ The second lesson we learn from Israel in overcoming tough situations is the importance of turning despair into hope. While Israel’s lack of faith is startling²⁵ in light of our “perfect hindsight vision;” in the face of overwhelming tribulation do we not usually hear “despair whisper, cast thyself down; lie down and die; complain against God; give it all up”²⁶ and cowardice whisper “relinquish the ways of God, and once more be a bond slave to your own corruptions and the

world’s evil habits?”²⁷ If we are to conquer the immovable mountains of our lives, our hope must be placed in God whom always does good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28). And when it comes to our ability to handle difficult situations righteously, our hope lies in the fact that we whom have the Spirit of God living inside of us are more than conquerors (Romans 8:31) for the force of grace within compels us to stand firm in the ways of God.²⁸ It is one thing to have faith in God’s sovereignty it is quite another to have hope and belief that God will save a wretch like me!

²² Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 273.

²³ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Exodus,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 387.

²⁴ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 131.

²⁵ D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 143.

²⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, “Direction in Dilemma,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 650.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 651.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Step 3 in Overcoming Tough Situations: Turn Impatience into Trust

After Moses told the children of Israel to have faith, not fear; and hope, not despair; he commanded them to stand firm. Can you imagine how hard it would be to stand firm in the face



of the “unleashed power of an Egyptian army”?²⁹ Moses commanded them to stop complaining and stand as still as an “immovable as a rock” as the Egyptian army drew ever so closer!³⁰ This of course is incredibly difficult to do for in the face of great danger our typical response is either flight or fight! “When a Christian is in very sharp trouble, one of his/her strongest temptations is to be in an unbelieving, fretful state of agitation, which leads him/her to premature and unwise action.”³¹ Much of the sin we do in life is a product of being in a “flurried state of heart”³² for the more we try by our own might to overcome a tough situation

the more we sink deeper into the mire of greater tribulation.³³ This brings us to our third step in overcoming tough situations and that is to stand firm, trust in the Lord and let Him guide your steps (Proverbs 3:5). Our faith and hope in God must be so secure that until God tells what, if anything to do; we stand firm and wait for Him to do the impossible in our lives! Our inaction with trust in God’s action is one of the most difficult but rewarding things a Christian can do to handle those tough situations we all inevitably face in life!

Step 4 in Overcoming Tough Situations: See the Deliverance

After Moses tells the children of Israel to stand firm, he promises them that they will see “Israel’s forthcoming deliverance and Egypt’s imminent demise”³⁴ that every day! Israel did not know that God was about to decimate the Egyptian army and in doing so would not only reveal that He alone was greater than any earthly king³⁵ but that He was willing to act to “maintain his covenant tie to *all* his people, past, present, and future.”³⁶ Since our tribulations are usually

²⁹ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 130.

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Direction in Dilemma](#),” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 652.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 143.

³⁵ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 132.

³⁶ Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 273.

much longer than a single day then how can we “see” our future deliverance? One way that a person can see future deliverance is to remember past ones! By remembering how God



delivered the great cloud of witnesses in the Bible (Hebrews 12) and how He has either saved or allowed us to persevere past tribulations, one can “see” and be thankful for the miracle of deliverance He is about to perform again and the peace that surpasses all understanding one is about to receive! Also, if one wants a glimpse of future deliverance “call upon God, and spread the case before Him; tell Him your difficulty, and plead His promise of aid;”³⁷ and many times He will reveal the path He wants you to take³⁸ and the outcome even before it happens! So,

the fourth step in overcoming tough situations is in reflection, prayer and thanksgiving ask and have faith that God will deliver you or sustain you through the most difficult of times!

Step 5 in Overcoming Tough Situations: Watch God Fight for You

I want to conclude this sermon by examining the promise Moses gave to Israel: “the Lord will fight for you; you need only be still” (14:14) As Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground that day and looked up at the walls of water all around them they could not help but marvel in the miraculous deliverance they were given, especially when they saw these walls collapse and drowned their Egyptian enemies! The same God that fought for Israel that day will fight for us as well. By allowing God to turn our fear into faith, despair into hope and impatience into trust we can see our deliverance and God fighting on our behalf. While God does not promise to eliminate our tribulations, He does promise to give us unspeakable joy when we seek and obey how He wants us to handle the most turbulent of times in our lives. “Compose yourselves, by an entire confidence in God, into a peaceful prospect of the great salvation God is now about to work for you!”³⁹ Where will I go to find refuge for my soul? I will go to the Lord!

³⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Direction in Dilemma](#),” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 653.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 114.