



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Liberator

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Exodus 14:1-31

Clint Pressley

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, ² “Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. ³ For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ ⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” ⁶ So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, ⁷ and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. ⁸ And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. ⁹ The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

¹⁰ When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” 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.”

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. 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.

(Pastor Prays)

We have happened upon the most important event in the entire Old Testament. God has brought his people out of Egypt. He did so with 10 plagues. The very last plague was the killing of the firstborn son in every home in Egypt. Now that they're out of Egypt, what happens next? Here we are, in chapter 14. It is the exodus. Here is the centerpiece of Israel's identity. This is the lodestar of all of their hope. This is their identifying mark. In fact, when Israel would go into the promised land and Joshua would send the spies into the land and into Jericho, we meet a woman named Rahab who was a prostitute and that prostitute she says, I know who your God is. He's the one that destroyed the Egyptians in the Red Sea. In Isaiah 51, he stands and talks about the power of God and says it is the Lord of Host and he's the one who divided the Red

Sea. Nahum, the great preacher in the Old Testament, go read it sometimes, Nahum is only a few chapters long, and it is nothing but hellfire. I mean, there's very little hope in Nahum. But it does pause and say, God rebuked the sea, and he made it dry. When you read this chapter right here, you need to put a star by it. In all of the Old Testament, this chapter 14 of Exodus is held up again and again and again to show us the supreme power of God to save his people.

Back to the apostle Paul, who was a good Jewish man, who understood the Old Testament, when he wrote to the church at Corinth, Corinth was a terrible church, and sometimes it's good for a preacher to go read First Corinthians. If he thinks he's got bad people in his church, go read First Corinthians. It gives you a little relief and you will think, oh, my people aren't that bad. They are mean, but they're not that bad. When you read First Corinthians, what you find is a terrible church that Paul has given instruction to and when he gets to First Corinthians 10, he reaches back to Exodus 14, to this chapter and he says, this was written for us, for our instruction.

This passage is here to teach us about God, and so my intent today in the time we have together, is to ask, how can this passage teach us about God? What does this show us about God? What does this show us about the gospel, and what do we do with it? What I'm hoping is that this passage will serve to strengthen your heart, to give you hope, to give you resolve, to give you joy, to keep going forward. Why? Because, here's the theme of the sermon.

God Has the Power To Get You Out

And to those in the choir, yes, I did steal the song. God has the power to get you out. Now, even more than we normally do, I want to go back and walk through the passage and point out a few things, and then, when we get near the end, I'll try to make some application. But the big thing is that I want you to walk away with a good understanding of Exodus, chapter 14. Join me there versus 1 through 4. You have God speaking to Moses. He's giving him an outline of what's going to happen. The people have come out of Egypt. They are now going into the wilderness. It's two million people on a march. Look what God tells Moses is going to happen. Join me there in verse 2. 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.* Ok, you're going in one direction, but I'm going to turn you around to go in another direction. Baal Zephon is a canal.

Migdol is a fortress. The Philistines evidently were in the land. I don't know all of these names. Archaeologists have never found them. This is here just to say this is a real place. You find that in verse 2, God has directed them to a place in verse 2. I want you to go here. Take a left turn, here you go, right there. That's where I want you. Why? Because Pharaoh, in verse 3, is going to see what they're doing and think they're just sort of lost in the wilderness. You see, God is laying a trap for the Pharaoh. And when Pharaoh sees that, he's going to make a bad decision. Verse 4 says, *⁴ And 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. He's already a sinner. His heart is already a sinful heart. Romans 1 says, I will give him over to his sin.

So that's God telling Moses what to do. Now, verse 5 is retroactive. We look back a little bit. So we go into where Pharaoh is in verse 5. *⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled*, remember, this is right after the Passover. There's not a home in Egypt that didn't lose somebody. Somebody died in every home. That has been absolutely devastating. And while they are mourning in their devastation, Israel is gone. They're walking out of there. So finally, in verse 5, Pharaoh is sort of coming to his senses. You know, if you've ever just had anything heartbreaking happen to you, it can be stunning. I was reading earlier in the week about John F. Kennedy when he was shot. His brother Bobby Kennedy was the attorney general, and he was going after the Mafia. And when his brother was shot, it put him in such despair and such depression that it took him eight months to get out of that. It looks like the Pharaoh is sort of coming to his senses since it's been 5 or 6 days. The people are 5 or 6 days away, walking at about two or three miles an hour. They are walking out into the desert. So, in verse 5, Pharaoh wakes up, and he says, what were we thinking? We've made a mistake. Who's going to clean up? Who's going to cook all the food? Who's going to make all the bricks? Somebody has to do the work. Why did we let them go? And so, Pharaoh and the people decide to go get them. You see them out there walking around. They're completely lost. They don't know what to do. Let's go after them. So, in verses 5 and 6, Pharaoh got his chariot; he has the best weaponry that is available at the time, and we see he has 600 other chariots, plus horses, and an army. They're coming after the Israelites.

I know why they're afraid. Pharaoh has this great army and all these chariots bearing down on Israel. What does Israel have? We've got an 80-year-old man with a stick in his hand. That is a bad setup right there. So, they're coming after Moses and Israel there in verses 5 through 7, and then God reaches in verse 8 and hardens Pharaoh's heart. By the way, you have man's will and God's sovereignty working together right here. Pharaoh makes some really bad decisions. In verse 8, God reaches in and hardens his heart. It is a heart that is already hardened. God has given them over. Look at the end of verse 8. ⁸ *And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.*

The Israelites are thinking, God is good, he's delivered us. They're coming out, but that word finally has a little bit of a negative edge to it. It has a little bit of a feel that the people had become a bit cocky. They plundered the Egyptians. They get all the goods, it's gold and silver, they are walking out with. They're victorious, and they're running through the end zone. And there's some excessive celebration in the end zone. They're walking out defiantly because things are going well. In verse 9, where God has told them to go, remember in verse 2, there are two names that are hard to say. The Egyptians come to the very same place. So, the Egyptians pursued them with all the horses and chariots and their horsemen, and their army overtook them encamped by the sea, just where God told Israel to go, Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. They've met up, and when that happened, when the people saw that Pharaoh and the armies were drawing near, they turned around, and they could see the dust clouds in the distance, and they lifted up their eyes. That's what the text says. And what did they see? Men on chariots are coming after them. And the text says that they panicked. They feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. And remember, Moses is the mediator. This is what they said in verse 11. ¹¹ *They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?"* Do you know what happens when people start to panic? You start blaming people, so Moses is the right one to blame and it turns really negative. ¹² *Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."*

You know what a crisis does. Sometimes when you're in the middle of a present-time crisis, it often has a weird way of making you think about how things used to be so good. But they

weren't that good, really. Later on, down the road, the Israelites will be doing this. They will say, we had everything we wanted to eat. We had it made. But if you remember, they had straw taken from them and were told to make more bricks. They were beaten and starved. Now they're saying, I wish we were back there in the middle of that. They are just piling on the negativity with just terrible complaining.

Be careful. Be careful if you are prone to that. Like if you're prone to being negative. The way you have defined it is you've said, well, I'm just a cynic. So, you're a cynic. Alright, so let's say you're a cynic. The problem with being a cynic is that so many times you are actually right about what you're saying. People are flawed, and they always let you down, and so you just assume the worst. Be careful because that falls into such negativity that it is not helpful. If we are in the middle of a bad situation and you walk in to tell us how bad the situation is, that is not helping. The people are saying, this is terrible, we're going to die, this is your fault. But look what the leader does in verse 13. Moses knew. You see, the people lifted up their eyes in verse 10, and they saw the Egyptians. What they didn't do was keep lifting their eyes up to see God. Some of you in this room have lifted your eyes, and you see what looks terrible. Lift them up a little higher, there is a pillar of cloud and fire. And so, Moses, standing there, knowing, he says in verse 33, Don't be afraid. Stand firm. That is the gladiator. Hold the line. That is the shield wall. That is Mel Gibson, Braveheart, riding across the truth. This is a command. Get a hold of yourself. See the salvation of the Lord. He will do the work with the Egyptians. Get a good look at them because you're not going to see them again.

You ought to circle verse 14 and make it a life verse. If you don't have one, I'm gonna give you a life verse today. Exodus 14:14. Here it is for you. ¹⁴ *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.* You see that phrase? I'm gonna give you two. The Lord is going to fight for you. Get that. The other is you don't have to talk so much. You know why he's saying that? Because in verses 11 and 12, it is all panic and negativity. Stop talking.

Moses says, the Lord is going to win this battle, and now business picks up. So, let's start with what happens. ¹⁵ *The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.* Moses is the mediator. Moses spoke for the people to God, and God spoke through Moses to the people. So, he's talking about the people. It's time for you to move forward. Here comes the miracle. 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. This is not like down at Myrtle Beach, right there close to the water, back away a little bit to where the tide has gone out, and the sand now is not just dry, but right here is where it's been packed down. I know that because the chariot captains are going to ride up to this spot and look, they have a good eye for where chariot wheels can go, they look at the sand, and they say, we can go in. It's hard enough to go in on. This sand was so packed and so hard and so dry, it's going to be something that is miraculous, not just the water stacked up in a wall.

Keep reading, verse 17, *¹⁷And 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. ¹⁸And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.*” And just so you know that things are going well, verse 19 is remarkable. Verse 19, *¹⁹Then 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, ²⁰coming 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.* It is remarkable that the cloud is there to guide God's people. The fire is there to guide God's people. But when they're in trouble, that cloud, instead of guiding, now it comes around behind to guard. You know what God does in your life? He guides and guards. This is what you find right there in verses 19 through 20.

The first part of the miracle is that Moses stretched out his hand, like the old man with the stick, and held it up. Then God does this great thing in verse 21. *²¹Then 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.* He made the sea dry land and a wall on one side, and a wall on the other. This is not a retaining wall, not a 3-foot wall. This is not mud. This is a wall reaching to the ceiling, up to where those lights are, a wall that high on one side, and a wall the same height on the other side. It's wide so that 2 million people can go through it. They're walking on packed sand. It is miraculous, and the people are being delivered.

As they walked through there, the Egyptians came up behind them. I mean, you find that right there in verse 23. The Egyptians pursued and remembered the captains; they looked at the sand and said it's hard enough to take the chariot wheels. Let's go down there. They're not

afraid. These are hardened warriors. They're coming after these slaves. I don't know what's going on with this water. So they drive in, just like God said they would. Verse 24 says, 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."* He looked down. This is like Genesis 11. This is like the Tower of Babel. Remember when God says, let's go down and see what those little humans are doing down there, cause I can't see it from here. Let's go down there. It's as if to say how the Lord looked down on those little bitty pitiful Egyptians. And what did he do? He threw them into a panic. He clogged their wheels. They were on that good sand. He clogged their wheels. The Egyptians knew right off, okay, we've got a problem here. Let's get out of here because Israel's God is fighting for them and against us. We should have known better.

And now here comes the second miracle. The people of Israel are out of the sea, but Egypt is still there. Here comes the second miracle. God says. Put your hand up again, Moses. Put that stick in the air. Everybody will know this is God doing this. Stretch out your hand over the sea that the water might come down upon the Egyptians. So the water now crashes down on the chariots and the horses and the Egyptian army and all of the soldiers. It's such a cataclysmic event that you get down to the end of verse 28, and you find out that there's not one soldier that survived. It is total annihilation. Just imagine being Israel, standing on the seashore, watching all that happen. In fact, it's so bad that not one person is left. Here's the commentary down here in verse 29. 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.* All the Egyptians died, but God's people, the people of Israel, walked on dry ground through the sea. 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 has the power to get you out. What do we learn here? Let me give you four lessons before we go. Here's the first one, number one. We learn from this passage that...

God must be glorified

Whatever situation you are in, God must be glorified. And whatever he does, and whatever place you are in, your major focus, I mean, if you read verses 23 and 24, if you read verses 17 and 18, then you get down to verse 30 and 31, there you have it over and over again, I will gain glory. I will get glory. No one else but God will be glorified. So, whatever situation you're in, the focus must not be the why. Our tendency is to say, why God, why is this happening to me? Why am I going through this? We ask why, looking for an answer. I want you to change the question. If you have to ask a question, stop asking why and start asking how. Not why me, but how God, how can I glorify you in this? Big things and small things and tragic things, there are enough people in this room who have walked through some really sorrowful times, and the tendency is to say Why? Why is this happening to me? Change the question to, How can God glorify you in this?

And what is big and small, what is tragic and triumphant? One of my favorite and one of my wife's favorite authors is Joni Eareckson Tada. Connie loves to read her books. Joni Eareckson Tada was an athlete as a young lady. She was a young, beautiful, athletic lady, and she had a diving accident and was paralyzed. And she has been in a wheelchair for about 50 years, maybe more. I've heard her in interviews say, I thank God for the wheelchair. How are you going to glorify God in what you are in? Paul wrote in Romans 11. What did he say? ³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* Are you doing that? Are you glorifying God in what you're in? Are you those people walking, and complaining, asking why? Because God must be glorified. That's one thing you learned from Exodus 14. Let's look at a second thing we learn, number two.

God is always in control

God is always in control. That is the theme of the Bible. That is the theme of Exodus. That is the theme of this chapter. You find it all throughout chapter 14. You see it in verses 3 and 4, when God describes for Moses, as he says, this is what I'm gonna do, because I am in control. You see it in the story of the parting of the Red Sea. This is God in control of creation. You find it in verses 8 – 10, when the people are afraid of the Egyptians coming. They should have raised their eyes up further. It's something for us to learn over and over again. God is in control of your enemies. God is in control of creation. God is in control of your family. God is in control of your direction. God is in control of your future. You learn that from Exodus 14 that you can trust

him. He is in control. Let me give you a third thing I think you can learn from this passage, number three.

God's ways are confusing

I know the Bible says that God's ways are not our ways. It's true. But oftentimes you feel like you've done the right thing, you've listened to what the Lord has said for you to do, and you get to the end of it, and it's a trap. You just didn't see it coming. I mean, you find that in verse 2, where God gives very specific directions for what the people are to do. He put them out there, just to have them turn back. There are a couple of places to turn, and I want you to end up at this spot. You get down to verse 9, and that's where the objections start. We just left them, and now you have told us to go back into this trap. Don't you sometimes wonder? This is confusing. Why is God doing this? God's ways are confusing. Why have you had sorrow like this? Let's go back to verse 8, where the people were so afraid when the Egyptians were coming, and they lifted up their eyes and saw, but they didn't get their eyes up high enough. You've not gotten your eyes up high enough.

In verse 31, they got their eyes up. They saw the fear of God, and they saw the power of God. Get your eyes up off that enemy and come in and put them up on the pillar of cloud and fire. Or better yet, come to the Cross of Jesus. You want to see the love of God poured out for you on the cross of Jesus Christ, who took the wrath of God for you. Put your eyes on the cross of Jesus, where your sins are atoned for, where you are received and reconciled to God. I know his ways are confusing. One of the lessons you learned here is that God's ways can be confusing. That's lesson three, maybe there is a fourth lesson to learn, number four.

God's grace saves sinners

Exodus 14 is the gospel. God's grace saves sinners. What does God do? Well, in verse 13, God removes fear. It's what the text says. Don't be afraid. God removes fear. Here's the second thing God does. God commands trust. What does he tell the people to do? To stand firm. Put on the full armor of God. When you have on the full armor of God, stand there. What else does God do? God delivers us from distress. He tells the people you're never going to see these

Egyptians again. Verse 14 should be your favorite verse in the Book of Exodus. It's a reminder that God fights for his people. That's verse 14. Stand there, and God will fight for you.

What else do we have to learn here? In verse 14, it says, you're talking doesn't help. I don't know if that's the best way to say it or not, but here's what it says: You be quiet and let God do the fighting. Why do you need to be quiet? Because in verses 12-13, all you were doing was panicking and complaining and thinking about how the good old days were yesterday, but they were terrible. Please don't say that the 70's, or 80's were the good old days. And the '60s, you've seen pictures, they were not good. What do we learn here? Your talk doesn't help. What else do we learn? If God does the fighting in verse 15, you can just take another step forward. Just take another step. I had the young man ask me, how am I going to get through this? Just take another step.

Here in chapter 14 is the entire picture of how God saves us by grace, how the Israelites contributed absolutely nothing to their victory, absolutely nothing. The only thing they contributed was complaining. God did it all. What did Jonathan Edwards say? The only thing that we bring to our salvation is the sin that makes it necessary. Stand and see the salvation of the Lord. He works for you. This God, who created you, has made it so you can be saved even though you have sinned and rebelled and run from him. And at the cross, what he has done is he poured out wrath on his son Jesus so he could pour out love on you. At the Cross, Jesus takes the wrath of God, the punishment you deserved, the punishment I have deserved. And he gives us the righteousness he has earned, and that is held up for you as a victory. And that victory can be yours, not if you act right, not if you do right. But if you will trust that Jesus has done that for you. This chapter reminds us that God has the power to get you out. With that in mind, this morning, I want you to join me now as we go to the Lord in a moment of prayer and commitment.

(Pastor prays)