

Deliverance; Or, the Red Sea

Pasture for the Flock of God · Exodus 14–15

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Deliverance; Or, the Red Sea The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore (Ex. 14:30).

To be safely sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood of the lamb, was the precious lesson taught by the passover. But many a soul has great distress, and becomes subject to the assaults of the adversary, even after having taken refuge in the blood of Jesus as the only shelter from the wrath to come. To be really trusting in the atoning work of Christ, as the alone foundation of peace and safety, is one thing; to know deliverance from self, and the world, and Satan, is another. Hence many souls have deep conflict, and are longing for deliverance, as they say, from the plague of their own heart, because they do not see how wondrously God has wrought this for them in the work of Jesus on the cross, as their substitute. It may be through much soul-conflict and distress that some are brought so entirely to look out of self as to fix the eye of their heart only upon the Lord Jesus; but this very sorrowful experience is usually turned to good account. All who are taught of God must surely be instructed according to the divine word, that the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63},

and sooner or later learn in their experience something of the truth, that no flesh shall glory in His presence, and he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord {see 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 2 Cor. 10:17}.

Conscious shelter then from the wrath to come some have, who know not the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. It is this latter subject which this chapter brings before us, and it is of the deepest importance to our souls to learn clearly from Scripture the Lord's own mind concerning this great deliverance. It is most remarkable that the place of the occurrence of this scene should be Pihahiroth, for it means "the entrance into liberty"; and the end of this chapter, and the singing which followed, tells us what a time of unprecedented happiness and rejoicing it was. They had learned in time of deepest trial the safety afforded them by the blood of the lamb, according to the word of the Lord. He had indeed passed over them. While death, with its attendant miseries, by the messenger of God's judgment, was in every other house, yet in virtue of the blood of the lamb they had been preserved. Thus kept in safety by the blood, and brought out of Egypt by the power of God, under His peculiar guidance, the pillar of cloud over them by day, and pillar of fire by night, it was not till they came to the borders of the Red Sea that their fears and anguish appear to have began. What immediately gave rise to it was lifting up their eyes and seeing the hosts of Pharaoh, his mighty men with their chariots and horses hotly pursuing them. The waves of the Red Sea rolling before them, and the king of Egypt with his armed soldiers immediately behind them, they found

themselves in such circumstances of peril and distress as they never expected, and for which they were totally unprepared. At once their minds became occupied with themselves, their dangers, and their

enemies; in fact, their circumstances. Their misery was intense. They wished they had never left Egypt. They murmured against Moses. We read, When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness (Ex. 14:10-12).

Such were the expressions of distress and misery which the children of Israel now gave forth, and it reminds us of another utterance of later date, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}.

Their case seemed to them so hopeless that they contemplated dying in the wilderness, and regretted they had ever left Egypt; they said that they actually preferred the cruel bondage of serving the Egyptians, to their present fear and anguish at the prospect of being wholly exterminated by Pharaoh and his hosts. But is it possible that these are the same people who only a short time before had personally experienced that they were objects of divine favor, and before whom went to lead them, the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night? Yes, they are the same people; and though they called unto the Lord, when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the vast multitude of Egyptian soldiers marching after them, they murmured against Moses, despondingly spoke of dying in the wilderness, and wrongly judged themselves worse off than when made to serve the Egyptians with rigor at the brick-kiln. In short, they never were so miserable before. It is a vivid illustration of what many a soul passes through now. The picture is not overdrawn. It is a life-like delineation, for it is drawn by a divine hand, and abounds with most instructive lessons. The fact is, that what at first usually brings a soul to realize its need of the Savior is the sense of guilt on account of sins committed. The burden of known transgressions, and therefore of deserved judgment, is so intolerable that the distressed heart cries out,

What must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}

and is rejoiced to find shelter in the blood of Jesus shed for the remission of sins, The joy is often very great at finding in the cross of Christ that God is both a just God and a Saviour {Isa. 45:21},

and hope therefore of eternal salvation lights up the dark scene where before only gloom and despondency had occupied the soul. Like the children of Israel in Egypt, they happily experience the sheltering value of the blood, and flatter themselves with the idea that they will never be unhappy again. So on they move in their Christian career. They tread a new path. They realize, too, that God is with them. Their backs are turned upon this Egypt world, and with their faces toward the promised rest -the land flowing with milk and honey {see Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:15; Jer. 11:5; Ezek. 20:6}

-- they go onward, according to their knowledge of the will and guidance of God, little suspecting what is so soon and so deeply to try them. A question, as yet unknown to them, must sooner or later exercise their consciences before God. Hitherto it was the transgressions they had knowingly

committed against an infinitely holy, sin-hating God, as we have noticed, that had distressed them; and this they knew had all been met for them, and their souls were happy in believing in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. But now the question is about the flesh (prefigured by the Egyptians, men of flesh), the nature from which all transgressions spring; or, as Scripture calls it, our “old man.” The fact is, the old nature, that which is born of the flesh, is totally unfit for God’s presence or His service; and to learn this experimentally cannot but be very distressing. To accept the doctrine because we see it in Scripture is simple enough; but to work it out in God’s sight, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing {Rom. 7:18},

is very humiliating. This was not in the least suspected by many of us when we first gladly accepted the shelter which the precious blood of the cross gave to our sin-stricken souls. Still, it has to be learned that the nature that did the sins, the old man, is so totally and irremediably bad -- not subject to God, neither indeed can be -- that the only way which God could deal with it was to judge it, and put it thus away out of His sight. The distress connected with this second lesson is often far greater than the distress of the first. Still, it is the way of learning deliverance, and the only way, as I judge, of entrance into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. When the soul that has known remission of sins through the blood of Jesus finds within, every now and then, an innumerable host of lusts, and pride, and murmurings, and complainings cropping up, and even if they do not break out, are ready at any moment to do so, the heart is ready to say, “Am I a Christian? Am I not deceived? I thought Christianity would make me always happy, and yet I am so miserable! I never supposed a real Christian could have known such abominable and unclean workings within as I have. Surely I am worse now than when I was in bondage to sin, and Satan, and

the world. Besides, resolutions do not drive these things out. Neither do ordinances eradicate them. They recoil after the severest bodily mortifications and self-denial. They boldly intrude in my prayers and holiest exercises. Now and then they lie dormant, but spring up again on the smallest occasions. No one knows this but myself and God; for I am speaking of workings within. I cannot overcome them. So that, distressed and almost ready to give up my profession of Christ’s name, I cry out, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’” Now, observe here, this is not, “O wicked sins that I have done!” but, O wretched man that I am! {Rom. 7:24}.

It is the flesh, with its affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24}

-- the nature that did the sins. And when our souls realize these evil workings within, headed by the power of Satan, threatening to have dominion over us, it becomes to us as clear and formidable an host as Pharaoh and his horsemen and army were to the timid and distressed children of Israel. And as nothing could pacify them but deliverance from this mighty power which was against them, and contrary to God, so nothing less than the setting aside in judgment of these hosts of evil within could meet the requirements of our consciences, because we know that nothing less could satisfy an infinitely holy God. And this, as we shall see, is what Scripture teaches us has been done. Blessed be the God of all grace! Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no

more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:13).

Here we see that God Himself would deliver them from this mighty host of flesh, and from Pharaoh its leader, and that by His own power, without any help whatever, or struggle, or interference of man, He would do it all completely, and for ever. It should also be their comfort and blessing to look and see what God did; and so when a soul has learned its thorough helplessness for overcoming flesh and Satan, and mastering self with its ten thousand forms of deceitfulness and desperate wickedness, and at last gives completely up, and cries out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}

he is taught by the Holy Spirit that God has delivered him through Jesus Christ our Lord. And looking back upon Him when hanging on the cross, and viewing Him now as risen from among the dead, he is led triumphantly to reply to his own question, I thank God through Jesus Christ {Rom. 7:25}.

He really knows what it is to “stand still” to “see” by faith a risen Savior, who was crucified, and he gives praise to God. It is well to see how fully God has met our need in the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus once suffer for sins the just for the unjust, but He, the holy One, was made sin for us; and we are told that God condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}

in Him. So that not only sins, the fruit unto death of an evil nature, have been suffered for, in that Jesus shed His blood for many for the remission of sins; but “sin in the flesh,” the nature that did the sins, has been so judicially “condemned” by God, and set aside as no longer to have a place before Him, that the Holy Ghost declares that our old man

(observe here it is not old sins, but old man)

ever entering the land. But by the power of God the waters of the Red Sea were divided so as to form a dry path, with a liquid wall on either side. The children of Israel were commanded to go forward {Ex. 14:15}.

All now that was needed was faith, in order to avail themselves of the value of this work of God, to pass through according to His word. This they did.

is crucified with Him {Rom. 6:6}.

And so completely is this recognized in Scripture that believers are now said to be “not in the flesh,” but “in Christ Jesus.” But what I want now to trace in Scripture is, that God has not only judged sins on Jesus on the cross, who purged them by His blood, but that He has judicially set aside as only fit for judgment our “old man” in Jesus our substitute, as truly as He swept away in judgment Pharaoh and all his hosts, so that the children of Israel might see them dead, and for ever after reckon them dead, and no longer living. In tracing the narrative in our chapter, we shall see that all is accomplished by the power of God. It is redemption by power. In Egypt it was redemption by blood. In Christ crucified, risen and ascended, we have both. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of

sins, according to the riches of His grace {Eph. 1:7}.

The blood must be the basis of all our blessing. Without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22}.

But we want more than remission of sins; we need to be brought to glory, and it is the work of Jesus to bring many sons to glory {see Heb. 2:10}.

It needed the power of God to bring those who had been sheltered by blood, not only clean out of Egypt, but to deliver them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, by bringing them through death and judgment on entirely new ground. Just as we are now, in Christ risen, not only rescued from this present evil world, but delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and put on entirely new ground, the other side of death. Looking back upon the cross, we see it has all been accomplished through death and judgment; so that death and judgment are now behind us; risen life in Christ possessed by us, for we are risen with Christ; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We, who were of the world, in our sins, in the flesh, and it may be under law, are now spoken of in Scripture as not of the world {John 15:19, 17:14, 16}, washed from our sins {see Rev. 1:5}, not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9}, not under law {Rom. 6:14, 15; Gal. 5:18},

but in Christ {1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:1, 2:13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:14}.

All this may be traced in this scene of the Red Sea, the waters of death, forming to man's eye an insuperable barrier to his

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land {Heb. 11:29}.

They gladly accepted God's way of deliverance. The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left {Ex. 14:22}.

Thus they crossed the Red Sea. But what of their enemies which they so feared? The very work of God that was to His people their deliverance and salvation, was the very work that for ever put away through death and judgment their enemies from their sight, so that they never saw them living afterwards. And does not all this bring home forcibly to our soul's remembrance the accomplished work of Jesus? When we think of deliverance from sin and Satan, death and judgment, where do we look? Did He not through death destroy him that had the power of death {see Heb. 2:14},

which is the Devil? Was not our "old man" -- the flesh, with its mighty hosts of affections and lusts, crucified with Him? And now, having life in Him who is out of death, risen with Christ, cannot we see death and judgment behind us, as surely as Israel saw the tumultuous waves of the Red Sea rolling behind them instead of before them? But let us never forget that God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the men of flesh. With hearts filled with bitter enmity to the things and people of God (for such is the flesh -see Rom. 8) the Egyptians hotly pursued after Israel. Like the carnal man still, they rushed madly and unconsciously into the very jaws of God's devouring judgment. So fatally ignorant and dark is man. They appeared to succeed for a little while. The counterfeit of faith in those men of

flesh seemed, too, to prosper for a moment. But, alas! alas! God was against them, and not for them. They had not believed God. They had not the shelter of the blood. God marked their evil ways, and, as usual, He took the wise in their own craftiness; for God will save His own, and He must judge the wicked. How awfully solemn this is! We read, God looked unto the host of the Egyptians;

God troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels,

until they said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians {see Ex. 14:24, 25}.

We also read that the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea {Ex. 14:27}.

Thus God wrought. How very blessed is the contemplation of this double aspect of the work of Christ, in executing judgment upon all our enemies, and bringing us out by His mighty power in raising Christ from among the dead, and giving us life and liberty for ever in Him. Glorious triumph! All is of God; to Him be all the glory! It was indeed the salvation of the Lord. This is the first time, if I mistake not, that the word “salvation” occurs in Holy Scripture. 1 It was a salvation from death and judgment, from Pharaoh and all the Egyptians. They saw the salvation of the Lord. And we read -Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore {Ex. 14:30}.

They were now looking at these great enemies of their souls as dead upon the sea shore, set aside for ever by the judicial hand of the living God. And so, believing what God says, that our old man is crucified with Christ {see Rom. 6:6},

we are enjoined to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as we reckon the old man to be living, and strive against him and his actings, we give him importance; but when, in virtue of the substitution-work of Jesus, we see that we have died, we give the flesh no place, no importance, we do not recognize it, have no confidence in it, so that our eyes are taken off self altogether, and fixed upon a risen Christ; or, if we think of the old nature and its actings, we only see it dead, we reckon it to have died in the cross of Christ, as having been under divine judgment. As long as a believer is thinking of old self and its lusts, watching against, and providing against it, he is reckoning the old man to be living, and not dead, and fear, and distress, and weakness, and failure of various kinds come out in consequence. We read that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24}.

And when? Was it not when they accepted God's judgment of it in the cross? We are therefore never told in the epistles to crucify the flesh, or to mortify the flesh, and for this reason, because God in His abundant grace has condemned it already -it has been crucified with Christ. But we are told to mortify, or put to death, the members of our body -- the unclean actings of this old nature still in us, which we are to reckon to have died. We are also taught to mortify, or put to death, by the Spirit, not the flesh still in us, but its actings, the deeds of the body {Rom. 8:13}.

All this is known only in the way of faith. Faith sees that God has done it, and believes God when He says He has done it. This is simple enough. To the apostle it was such a reality that he said, I am crucified.

And if you ask, “When?” he replies, 1. {Nearly so! The first is in Gen. 49:18 (Jacob blessing his sons), the second is in Ex. 14:13 -- Moses foretelling salvation from the Egyptians at the Red sea. But the Red Sea is a great type of the salvation -- in the NT sense of the word -- of the believer, involving deliverance.}

with Christ.

And lest we should suppose it to be an alteration merely of the old nature, he adds, Nevertheless I live; yet not I (not the old nature improved), but Christ liveth in me {Gal. 2:20}.

It is a new nature that lives; it is Christ his life living in him; for he is a new creation in Christ Jesus. We do well then to remember the wide contrast in Israel’s experience when they looked at the Egyptians as living and when they looked at them as dead. So we may be assured that if we look into the workings of flesh in us, and be occupied with it as if living, we must not expect to be otherwise than very wretched. The most miserable people on earth, perhaps, are Christians who have given themselves up to self-occupation, and the more so because they are God-fearing and conscientious; for, having learned the folly of the world’s resources, they have nothing to lift them outside self, or to keep them from being occupied with it; and surely the happiest people on earth are those who rejoice in Christ Jesus, worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh {see Phil. 3:3}.

Blessed are those, who, knowing they have risen life in a risen Christ, do reckon themselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Such worship and adore God as their God and Father, and praise Him for all His wondrous grace to them in Christ Jesus, and through His precious blood. We therefore find when Israel had got the other side of the Red Sea how happy they were. It was a joyous moment; for they were entirely occupied with God, and what He had done. They were not occupied with self, nor with circumstances, but, I repeat, with God. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. . . . Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy {Ex. 15:1-6}.

What a burst of triumph this is! And what a change from the sore distress they were in such a short time before! But now they had seen God’s salvation, and His great deliverance from the formidable host of the Egyptians, which threatened to swallow them up in their wrath. They were thus in liberty and on new ground. God had delivered them, God had given them the victory; and now they are taken

up with Him, praising Him, and giving the glory due unto His name, ascribing all the power and glory of their deliverance to Him. How simple, and yet how very blessed, this is! What secrets are unfolded, what resources are opened up to us, in the contemplation of a crucified and risen Savior! And where, dear Christian friends, do we take our place