

Forward in Faith in the Lord

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to read from that passage we were just mentioning. We're going to read from Exodus chapter 14, and we're going to read from verse 15 to the end of the chapter.

Verse 15. The Lord said to Moses, Why did you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. 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.

And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, so that they shall go in after them. And I will give glory over Pharaoh and all his hosts, his chariots and his horsemen.

And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, for I have gained glory over Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen. 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, coming between the host of the army of Egypt and the host of the people of Israel. And there was the cloud and there was the darkness.

[1 : 18] And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. 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. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea and dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all fear his horses, his chariots and his horsemen. 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, 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. 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.

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.

[2 : 44] The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen of all the hosts of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained. 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.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians. And Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power of the Lord that the Lord used against the Egyptians.

So the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and his servant Moses. It's God's Word. May God bless that reading from his Word.

As we consider the main theme, really, of this passage, when we look to the presence and power and protection of God, the three headings that you see there on the screen, the Lord's promise. As God promised to be with his people, to keep them, to save them, and to be with them by his presence, and to show his presence by his power.

[3 : 58] As the people are commanded to move forward in faith in the Lord. I still remember when I was a young boy going with my parents to the cinema, to see Cecil B. DeMille's famous and epic film, The Ten Commandments.

I'm sure we'll have seen that film. I suppose it was a long time ago. I suppose it was well over 50 plus years ago. But one scene I've never forgotten.

And that's the scene when the Israelites cross the Red Sea, and the sea separating into two walls, the two walls of water on either side. And the Egyptians pursuing them, and the Israelites crossing over.

The scene was memorable. It was Technicolor brilliance. It was really a masterpiece of special effects. The film was made, I think it was in 1956, and the effects then staggering in their proportion. And it was really a masterpiece of cinematography. But of course, the actual events, as we see recorded here in Scripture, the actual events were no illusion of special effects.

[5 : 09] What we read here in Exodus, Exodus 14, is reality. The reality of God's power. The reality of God's presence. The reality of the promises of God being fulfilled.

The parting of the Red Sea by his power that allowed the Israelites to escape, escape from the pursuing Egyptians, that allowed the Israelites to move forward on their journey to the promised land.

And this, by a miracle of the Creator. God revealing his glory. God protecting his people from evil, from danger.

God ensuring their deliverance. As they carried on with their journey. But you remember this, that all that we've read here, all that we know of in this episode, it's not above all focusing on the Israelites.

It's not above all focusing on the Egyptians. It's not even focusing primarily on Moses, although of course all these characters are there. But above all, our focus is in God the Lord.

[6 : 20] Because we're seeing God in control of every event. God fulfilling his promise of delivering his people. And God's presence, as we've said, with his people is power evident.

Because God's will will be done to the salvation of his own. It's God then, God the Lord, who's the focus of the story here. And of course, God the Lord has to be the focus of our own hearts.

As we seek, as you seek to trust in him for all things. Especially when these all things appear impossible to be resolved.

When it's as it were, we look to the circumstances and take our eyes that we ought not to do. Take our eyes from God, the God for whom nothing, nothing is impossible.

So let's focus in then a little more on God the Lord and the passage here. The Lord's promise, as we read there in verses 15 to 18.

[7 : 22] As we come to where we started our reading this morning, well, we might say the scene's set. The scene's set for the power of God, the glory of God to be revealed. God's been faithful to his people all throughout.

People have been at many times unfaithful to God, but God has been faithful to his people. He's delivered them from the oppression in Egypt. He's enabled them to move out of Egypt.

He's taken them on a particular course to avoid us. Remember, we saw previously to avoid the danger of the Philistines. So they've gone down the Sinai Peninsula.

Then they've crossed it. It seems to the Egyptians that they're in confusion. But God along, all the way along this time, he's leading the people and leading them right to the Red Sea.

To the people, it would have seemed strange that in order to get to the promised land, they're going to have to cross this river and it seems impossible to do so. And then the Egyptians, as we said to the children, the Egyptian force, this mighty, mighty army pursuing the Israelites and the people afraid.

[8 : 32] But Moses and his leadership, his strong leadership, is telling the people to stand firm and to see that God will fulfill his promises by his power and his protection over his people.

God will intervene. God will act. And that Red Sea that it seems so impenetrable and it's impossible to cross. The Red Sea is going to be divided.

But before that's going to happen, the people are being commanded to move forward, to move forward in faith. And they'll cross the Red Sea. They'll cross that pathway in safety.

And God will move the Egyptians to pursue them. And they're in that passageway to be destroyed. And God, promising all this, even by these two little English words, I will, I will.

You see, God's going to act to change the impossible into the possible and to be realized by a miracle of deliverance.

[9 : 44] What God has promised is as good as fulfilled because this is the Word of God. And surely, even for today, for the Lord's people today, you cling to God's promises, however difficult that might be at times.

The Bible's full of God's promises. Promises preceded with the words, I will. Because these are reminders of God who is faithful.

He's our faithful Lord. And cling to these promises, particularly ones that you see beginning with the words, I will. I will. Delight your heart to read them even today.

Take a promise of God and take it into your heart. The promises that Jesus made proceeded with the words, I will. I will be with you always.

Even to the end of the edge. Do you believe that promise? Even in these dark nights of the soul, when Jesus says, I will be with you and is with you.

[10 : 51] What if some of you, perhaps even lacking assurance of your salvation, will listen to the words of Jesus again? All that the Father gives me will come to me.

And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. Not one who comes to Jesus by faith will be cast out. It's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And the promises of yesterday, well, we apply today as they apply through all the ages. And we'll apply until Jesus returns. Of course, the promise of his return is as good as fulfilled.

And in that promise, in these promises of Jesus, the promises of God and Christ, well, there's that promise of his presence with you, as we've seen. The promise of his presence now, the promise of his presence eternally.

And the presence of the Lord, the promise of the presence of the Lord, well, we see that in the deliverance of the Israelites, as we read there from verses 19 to 25, where we see particularly the emphasis on the Lord's presence.

[12 : 04] God has already shown his presence to be with his people, as we know, by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. The pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night.

God leading his people by that pillar. But what do we read here? What do we read here when the Israelites are being pursued by the Egyptians, the Egyptians getting closer and closer to the Israelites?

We read there was a change in the direction of the pillar. In verse 19, we're told that the, well, the angel of God, the angel of the Lord, the angel who'd been in the pillar in front of the Israelites, we're now told that that pillar moves behind the Israelites.

In other words, creating that barrier between the army of Egypt and the Israelite people. And so these Israelites, these Israelites who'd been in so much fear, so much doubt even, they're now being shown, as God had shown them already in the plagues, they're now being shown again that God makes a distinction between those who are his and those who are against him.

And even, we're told there in verse 20 that there was darkness on one side, on the Egyptian side, but there was constant light on the Israelite side. So God's making his presence known to his people.

[13 : 32] Even the dividing of darkness and light. And the angel of the Lord instrumental in that action. And here's Moses speaking particularly of the angel of God.

The angel of the Lord active in dividing the two sides. I think we can safely say from other parts of Scripture there's every reason to believe that when we see here this reference to the angel of God or the angel of the Lord, this is a pre-incarnate presence of the eternal Son of God.

His presence with the Israelites. And you who are his, you have that same assurance of his presence with you. John, John, the disciple, he could, he could testify to his physically seeing God in the Son.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father full of grace and truth. You who are Christ's, you see him by faith. Jesus has made himself known to you by his word.

And so as the author of Hebrews says, you see Jesus. And be assured of this, that his presence remains with you, his abiding presence, even in you, in you, by his Spirit.

[14 : 58] Jesus, as we've said, has promised, I will be with you always. He is with us always, with you always, by his Spirit, the abiding presence of Christ in you.

Now, the world outside of Jesus, the world outside of Christ, knows nothing of this abiding presence. Knows nothing of the reality of Christ in you.

But that distinction between those who are his and those who are not, is real. The distinction is real because the Lord Jesus is real. His presence with you who are his is real.

And that distinction of him with you, him beside you, him before you, him in you, that ensures your eternal security in Christ.

Just as the presence of the angel of the Lord with the people there ensure their security, their protection, even in the midst of so much danger.

[16:02] And so the promises of God there have been carried out. The presence of God is with the people to ensure their safety. And the power of God is going to be seen.

The power is going to be demonstrated in fulfilling his promises. His presence is going to be visibly seen, as it were, through the miracle of the division of the waters.

As we see the Lord's power in very much the largest section of this passage, verses 21 to 20, well, to 31. And three things I want to direct you in this particular, if you like, this part of this passage concerning the power of the Lord.

God's power over creation and God's power over man and God's power that's seen and seen and believed in. You know, I don't think we really do dwell enough on the whole matter, the whole truth of the God of power.

I mean, we can understand power in various ways, I suppose. You know, think of the modern day aspects of power. Think of power in the realm of technology, for example.

[17:17] You know, the power of an airplane engine, the incredible power in that engine. Or the power of electric currents that we see every day, the power that's enabling this service to be recorded.

I mean, this is all wonderful in itself, God using even his creation to enable us to live by, as it were, many ways to live by this power. But the power of God is infinite.

The power of God is immeasurable. It's that power that formed the heavens and the earth, as our shorter catechism tells us. Question, what's the work of creation?

Listen to the answer in relation to power. The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good.

You see, God's power is real and God's power changes, changes things from chaos to order. It's God's power that removes darkness and brings in light.

[18:24] It's God's power that transforms hearts, transforms hearts that are dead in sin to be alive in Christ. And that power of God seen here in the evidence of the Red Sea, that deliverance of his people by the miracle of the dividing of the waters.

God had promised Moses that he'd see God's power. That power is going to be seen in all the splendor, all the majesty of that power, even for the sake of his people.

As Moses, many years later, recorded the events here that are written down in the book of Exodus, Moses never forgot the power of God. He never forgot that great act of God.

We read there in verse 21 that the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land and the waters were divided. There's God intervening in his creation.

God allowing his people to pass through what had seemed an impossible barrier to get through. What to man seemed impossible.

[19:35] to God was utterly possible because God is God of creation. He can order his creation as God sees fit because our God is able.

It's the same power that God when God is with you, when you pass through the waters, when you pass through even the turbulent waters of life that, yes, God will give to you when he tests you, when he tries your faith, when he strengthens your faith in him.

That's what we read elsewhere in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 43. Fear not for I have redeemed you. I've called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, listen to the promise, I will be with you.

Through the waters, through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. The flames shall not consume you for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

See, the Israelites, they passed through the waters and dry land. They did it by the enabling power of God over his creation. God kept his people from being destroyed by his power over creation.

[20:53] And it's the same God who keeps his new creation, keeps you from being utterly overwhelmed when you pass through the waters, even the waters of adversity.

Because it's his power in your life, active in your life that keeps you from utterly sinking, utterly falling. God keeps you steadfast in faith, even when your faith is as, well, as small as a grain of mustard seed.

The Israelites, they were kept. They were kept when they crossed the Red Sea and foot. They were kept to reach the side of safety. Not one of them was lost.

And, of course, when we think of God and his saving grace, it's the power of his grace, the power of his saving love. All who are his, not one, not one is lost.

See, God is all-powerful over his creation. He's all-powerful in keeping you who are his, his new creation, keeping you safe in Christ.

[22 : 01] Power over creation, yes, power over his new creation. But then, secondly, power over man. You see, God had promised that, well, they'd ensure that the Egyptian forces, that they'd pursue the Israelites, but they wouldn't gain the victory over them.

God's power was going to be seen and his sovereign purpose has been fulfilled. fulfilled, and fulfilled, yes, for his namesake, for his glory. You see that in the events, as we read of the drama there that happened, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and dry land safely.

Egyptian forces pursuing the Israelites. It seemed as if there was going to be an inevitable victory for that Egyptian army. But as we read there, certainly from verse 24 to 29, God is sovereign.

God in full control of events. It's by his power, by his power even over man, that man will not gain the victory, not gain that victory over God, not gain that victory over his people.

You see there, first of all, verse 24, God throws the Egyptian army into confusion. Just picture in your mind what's happening as daylight comes.

[23 : 19] The Egyptian army, they're seeing the wall of water on either side of them. And there's no doubt that they would have panicked at that. In fact, we get a very interesting observation of this event from Psalm 77.

Psalm 77 actually tells of the events of the Red Sea that day. And it tells really of the panic that was put into the Egyptian forces because of the terrifying power of God.

The clouds poured out water, the skies gave forth thunder, your arrows flashed on every side, the crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind, your lightnings lighted up the world, the earth trembled and shook, your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters, yet your footprints were unseen.

God in his power, even in his power over creation, God was causing these Egyptians to be confused. all these terrifying natural phenomena that were crushing down upon them.

Frustration even, the chariots were not able to move at any such pace because they're getting stuck in the mud. Obviously a great downpour of rain as Psalm 77 tells us.

[24 : 38] In fact, the very fact that it's called the Red Sea, it's called the Red Sea after the reeds, the Red Sea, the Red Sea, the reeds there, again, no doubt causing the chariots not to be able to move fast.

And so you've got all this combination of these natural events, God in these events, the panic of the army, the chariots not able to move, God's power being revealed, the Egyptian army deciding that they have to retreat.

But again, the power of God over man, over those who will not recognize him. And the Egyptians will learn to their cause that no human power, no human spirit can thwart God's purposes.

God in absolute control. Moses again raises his arm and the waters cover the Egyptian army. Every charioteer, every soldier in that army lost.

Every Israelite crossed to safe ground. God, as we said, distinguishing there between those who are his, those who are not.

[25 : 51] And you who are his, you can have that absolute confidence that no matter who or what seeks to overthrow the purposes of God, no matter how much even we're seeing in our present time, all who will seek to frustrate the cause of the gospel, it's happening, it's happening as we see every single day.

But God in his own time and for his own purposes, his great purposes, he'll overthrow completely all who are against him. And you know, when you do see the hand of God at work, then, as with the Israelites, you will fear God and you'll put your trust in him.

We saw that in verse 31, because the evidence of God's power is, well, is before us. power that's seen and believed in. And listen again to these words, the number of times that the Israelites are

described as having seen.

The Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 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 their servant Moses. The very eyes the Israelites could see that they were delivered because of God's great power.

[27 : 19] The people saw, they feared, and they believed. I pray that the same way you will see, that you'll see the Lord God Almighty in all his power, and that you'll truly, in that seeing, that you'll fear God, that you'll give him the glory.

And in doing so, that you'll believe in him, that your faith will be strengthened in him, that you'll believe in his power, and you'll put your faith in him, because God is leading you.

He's leading all who are his, and he's leading you in love. It's that love that distinguishes between those who are his, you who are his, and those like Pharaoh and his forces who reject him.

See, that love, the love of God was seen there in that dividing of the sea. That love, the love of God, that love saved the people. But we can say this as we close.

That dividing of the sea, that dividing pointed forward to another dividing, pointed forward to the dividing of that temple curtain when Jesus died on the cross.

[28 : 31] and that dividing, that tearing of the temple, that dividing of the temple, that temple curtain that signified that the way to God was now open because of the death of the Lord Jesus.

And so, in our hearts, even now, bow before the Lord Almighty, because he's opened up the way for your deliverance, deliverance from darkness, to bring you into his marvelous light, to continue to trust in him because of his steadfast love towards you.

And as you do that, trust in his promises and know that his abiding presence remains with you. And rest in that promise, rest in his presence, rest in his power, that power to deliver as God leads you, as God leads you to your place of eternal rest, that place of promise, your eternal heavenly home.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, have mercy upon us, we pray. We, who are sinners, have mercy, Lord. Save us by your power.

Strengthen us by your power. Deliver us by your power. May we truly know that power that is almighty. and to truly know that you are the one who has, by your love, opened up that way for us, so that we might approach you all through the love of the Lord Jesus and giving himself for us.

[30 : 10] Hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you now. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.