

Deliverance Delivered

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[0 : 00] Well, now I wonder if you would do two things. If you would open your Bibles, please, at Exodus 13, 14, which was on page 58, 59.

And when you have that, if you could turn over to Luke chapter 9, which is on page 66 near the back. And if your mind wanders off, pray for the Sunday School teachers this morning who are trying to show that Jesus is better than Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Now, in Luke chapter 9, we are told about one of the most amazing events in the life and ministry of Jesus, where he takes Peter, James and John, he goes up to the top of the mountain and all of a sudden, light breaks out.

Let's look down there at chapter 9, verse 29. As Jesus was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered.

His raiment became dazzling white, which is why Anglican clergy wear robes. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.

[1 : 25] So, there is Jesus shining with glory, the same glory that we have been speaking about in the book of Exodus. And two people appear, Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets.

And it's a blinding and dazzling spectacle. And we're told one detail, what they were talking about. And they were talking about Jesus' departure that he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.

Do you know the word departure isn't the greatest translation? It's not like an Air Canada lounge, where, you know, Moses and Elijah are saying, oh, it's going to be six o'clock. No, no, it's going to be eight o'clock.

No, no, it's Air Canada. It's going to be tomorrow. In the Greek, the word departure is the word exodus. They are speaking about Jesus' death and resurrection.

And what Jesus is saying is that in his death and resurrection, he fulfills the exodus. So, the salvation and the liberation that we've been looking at in the book of Exodus, points forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[2 : 40] The death and resurrection of Jesus are so vast and so wide and so significant, it took all the law and all the prophets to prepare the world for it. And the reality of what we've been looking at, this amazing reality of God rescuing his people from Egypt, is a rehearsal for the real thing in Christ's death and resurrection.

It's why it's so important for us to study the book of Exodus. If you want to know Jesus Christ, if you want to know what he has done for us in his death and resurrection, the way to do that is to understand the book of Exodus.

Because you know, as we've seen, in Exodus, God introduces entirely new terms into the language of his people. For the first time, he speaks about salvation and redemption and deliverance and rescue, and you just can't boil those down to a couple of words.

The only way to really understand those things is to see them acted out in the reality of the lives of the people about whom we're reading. And if we ask the question, how does the death of Jesus rescue us?

How does he deliver us? The book of Exodus gives two answers. And the first one, the bishop gave us last week, Bishop Ben, who preached, preached on the Passover. And the Passover is about salvation through substitution.

[4 : 02] You remember? At the heart of the Passover, every house that is under protection, there's a lamb that's been killed.

The blood's been put on the lintels. The life of the lamb has substituted for the life of the firstborn. And when Jesus comes, begins his ministry, John the Baptist sees him and he says, Behold the lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world.

And later on, Jesus says, Look, I have not come into this world to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom on behalf of many. I will stand in your place in my death.

I will be your substitute. And that is the first answer to the question of how Jesus' death rescues us. It's by substitution. The second answer is the passage we look at today is the crossing of the Red Sea.

And what this is showing us is that salvation comes by God fighting for us. That salvation is a victory of God over our enemies, which means that what Jesus does in his death is he fights for us against all our true enemies, all the things that will utterly enslave us, everything that stands between us and God.

[5 : 20] And we need to ask the question as we go back to the book of Exodus, if you want to turn back there now, I just want to ask two questions. And the first is, What is God doing?

And the second is, How does he do it? So firstly, What is God doing? And the simple answer is, God is lifting heaven and earth to rescue his people who could not lift a finger to rescue themselves. See, in chapter 14, when it begins with all those very long names, Pharaoh thinks he's got Israel exactly where he wants them. They're stuck between the wilderness and the deep blue red sea. And he says to his military guys, Let's get your weapons, let's go and have some target practice. Now, why is this happening? Look at verse 4 in chapter 14. God says, I will harden Pharaoh's heart, he will pursue my people, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his hosts, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.

And they did so. God brings his people to the place of utter vulnerability to show his glory when he overthrows the Egyptians.

[6 : 36] Did you notice when Julie was reading it, there's a massive emphasis on the military power and might of the Egyptians. Just cast your eyes down chapter 14, verse 6 and 7, chariots, army, 600 picked chariots, other chariots of Egypt, officers, verse 9, all the king's horses and chariots and horsemen and army, verse 10, verse 17, verse 18, verse 23, verse 25, verse 26, verse 28, it's all through it.

Why? Because we're meant to see that slavery, freedom from slavery, does not happen easily. It's going to be very and terribly costly. There's massive opposition to the freedom of God's people. You see, nobody just evolves or grows into salvation spontaneously or naturally. It doesn't happen. You don't go to sleep one night, a slave, and wake up the next morning a happy free person. True freedom involves a victory and a fight over everything that enslaves us, which is what happens on the cross. That is what God is doing in this chapter.

Look at verse 14. As God says, as Moses says to the people, the Lord will fight for you. You only have to be still. Or over in verse 25, the Egyptians, when it's too late, they say, the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.

[8 : 09] And no sooner do the waters close over the Egyptians, then Moses and God's people in chapter 15 sing a song. Look at this, look at chapter 15, verse 1.

Moses and the people of Israel sang this song, saying, I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and rider thrown into the sea. Verse 3, the Lord is a man of war.

The Lord is his name. God does not like to fight. God is the source of love. He is the source of peace.

And he is the source of reconciliation. But he will fight because we are so precious to him and we are so deeply enslaved and we are so unable to rescue ourselves that unless he is willing to fight for us, we are lost forever.

It is like the work of judgment. It is God's strange work. And the only reason that God will fight for us is that we have been taken captive and there is fierce and wicked opposition to our liberty.

[9 : 20] You see, your willingness to fight for someone is entirely dependent on how precious that person is to you and how much you love them. Just imagine that you are a young couple living in a foreign country and you have six-year-old twins.

Now, this illustration is rated PG. I don't think he will understand this.

And just imagine you have heard that in the local area there are slave traders who will abduct children and sell them into slavery. And you come home one day and you see one of these gang

leaders leaving by your back door with your two six-year-olds bound and gagged over his shoulder. Do you fight back? Of course you do. What if the guy is bigger than you and there is risk that you might get hurt? Do you fight back? Of course you do.

This has got nothing to do with pacifism, nothing to do with militarism. It has to do with something far deeper with what Jesus and Moses and Elijah were talking about on the mountaintop.

Something that is far more significant than any kind of political or physical liberation.

[10:31] because when we come to the New Testament we find that the grinding cruelty of slavery that Israel experienced under the tyranny of the Egyptians is a shadow of the deeper and more vicious slavery that grips every single one of us.

It is slavery to death, it is slavery to sin and it is slavery to Satan himself. And apart from Jesus Christ and apart from his death and resurrection, we are held in life-long bondage to Satan to death within the dungeon of our own ego.

That's the teaching of Jesus. It is precisely because of these wretched things that God has sent his one and only Son. It's because of these things that Jesus' ministry was so full of constant conflict.

The moment after he's baptised he goes out into the desert and confronts Satan head on. So deep is his love for us, so precious are we that he puts forth his own Son to fight for us.

Listen to these words from Colossians. Don't look it up. Let me read these to you. This is speaking about the cross of Christ where the battle takes place. Paul says this, There God forgave us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands.

[11:56] This is substitution. He set them aside nailing them to the cross. All the charges against us he nailed to the cross and then he says he disarmed the principalities and powers.

He made a public example of them triumphing over them in the cross. How does the death of Jesus free us and deliver us and save us?

By substitution and by victory. We are forgiven as Jesus stood in our place for sin and as he's nailed to the cross our sins are paid for as he dies in our place.

But it was no easy light weekends work for him. It is a cosmic and a titanic battle and as he is nailed to the cross Satan is nailed to the cross and everything that stands opposed to us is also defeated there and Jesus disarms the powers and triumphs over them in his death.

But I'm very aware that whenever we use language like victory and triumph it can smack of triumphalism and there are there's any number of Christian con artists and charlatans who preach a God who has no room for suffering and pain a kind of divine equivalent of an automatic telemachine.

[13:15] You know you put in the right pin and you get out victory over your dental problems or triumph over your romantic problems or your financial problems. But we mustn't allow the con artists to steal this wonderful and central truth that in the death of Jesus God has defeated sin and death and Satan and I think it's right for us deeply profoundly right for us to celebrate victory when the evil which has been overcome is so dangerous and enslaves us forever.

Christ appeared says the New Testament to destroy the works of the devil and he saves us not just by paying for our sins but destroying the accuser. For all those who are in Christ Jesus brothers and sisters there's no condemnation sin cannot separate us from God death cannot separate us from God and we run with Paul to the end of 1 Corinthians 15 and he looks death in the face and he says death where is your victory it's gone this is the victory that overcomes the world that triumphs over the world even our faith it's amazing this is wonderful stuff and this is what God is doing in the Red Sea he is fighting to free his people who do not have the power to free themselves that is the glory and grace of God that he would fight for us we have taken this word grace and we've thrown it on the ground and trodden it underfoot we've made it this kind of passive thing where people turn a blind eye to the naughty things we do a kind of indulgent non-judgmentalism that is not the grace of the scriptures what God does in the

Red Sea shows that grace is very active that he steps in on our behalf when we are powerless when we have no ability to help ourselves and he is willing in the end out of his grace to give the life of his own son for us so precious are we so that we might be free that is the what what is he doing he is fighting for us and the second question is how does he do it and the answer is one word he does it alone did you notice at the end of chapter 13 that God does not take his people the easy route to the land of Canaan have you ever noticed that God does not take us the easy way if you haven't noticed that come and see me later I'll fix it up the last episode in chapter 13 Israel have escaped the land the easy route would have been just to walk around to the land of Canaan 14

days it would have taken but God directs them back into the wilderness until they're squeezed there by the sea he never takes them by the easy route because

God knows their hearts look at verse 17 in chapter 13 you see there God says that the first sign of trouble Israel is going to race back into the arms of Egypt isn't that amazing the hearts of God's people are so addicted to idols that not only does God have to fight for us but that he has to fight to win our hearts and God keeps putting us in places that are way beyond our comfort zone because he will save and he alone and if you are wondering what is God doing in your life why has he got you in the place that you are in this is why he takes Israel to the absolute dead end turns them back from the easy way leads them until they're stuck there and when Pharaoh comes and corners them on the edge of the sea they have no place to go no possible human help they are beyond their capabilities and that is where we learn to trust God what do they do verse 10 to 12 in chapter 14 they say to Moses is not this what we said to you in Egypt verse 10 when Pharaoh drew near and the people of

Israel lifted up their eyes behold the Egyptians were marching after them and they were in great fear and the people of Israel cried out to the Lord 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 is not this what we said to you in Egypt let us alone that we serve the Egyptians it would be better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness and so we have the first Jewish comedy routine in the Bible they say to Moses weren't there enough graves in Egypt the whole country is a monument to death were we not working were we not working on the pyramids when you brought us out here what you want for us to swim now but it's not so funny is it because of verse 12 despite the fact that they've seen the ten plagues despite the fact that God is with them in the cloud of fire and smoke they turn on Moses and they say we want to serve [18:34] Egypt it's better to be a slave of Pharaoh than a slave of God we know God has promised to rescue us we know he did those ten plaguey things but it's just too hard to trust him to come through for us and slavery back to those false gods is easier than having to trust God when things are so hard and I think that's probably always true it's easier to trust false gods than it is to trust the true and invisible gods and I think there's an insight here because what false gods do is they offer us ease they give us the line of quick gratification their offer is completely empty of course they always give the opposite I mean take three popular gods in our culture wealth success and reputation all good things in themselves no doubt but if you give yourselves to them they will flay your backs and they will place you in the straw pit until you are broken that is the way it is with false gods they promise ease but God knows that he has to show that he can be trusted and he alone so he brings us to the end of ourselves and what is

Moses answer to their complaining and their grumbling it's wonderful verse 13 fear not stand firm see the salvation of the Lord which he will work for you today for the Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again the Lord will fight for you you only have to be still this is what marks off the God of the scriptures from every other God it's that he saves and he alone in every other religious system salvation is dependent upon me or upon a combination of me and my God I have to follow a path I have to achieve enlightenment I have to achieve purity I have to achieve detachment I have to be meritorious the God of the Bible fights for us the God of the Bible is the one who works salvation alone without us doing anything whatsoever towards it one of the former archbishops of Canterbury said this the only thing of my very own

I contribute to my redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed and God tells Moses exactly what to do to stretch out his hand towards the water but before we see the result of that I just want to show you verses 19 and 20 and make a comment on this I want to read this to you in the NIV the angel of God who'd been travelling in front of Israel's army withdrew and went behind and the pillar of cloud also moved in front and stood behind them coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel and throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to one side and light to the other side so that neither went near each other all night long have you noticed did you notice in the reading that since the beginning of this episode God has been with his people in this fiery cloud and that is because God does not come to us and ask us for our commitment first he comes to us he saves us and he protects us and he goes with us and we look back and we see this is what the Lord has done and we can trust him in the future and the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire are not two separate things they're one thing and during the day it's a cloud and it offers protection from the sun and guidance and during the night it's fire and offers warmth and protection and on this night

God goes between the two armies and did you notice that on the Egyptian armies he presses in a darkness like plague number nine so that Pharaoh and his army are not able to move but on the other side there is light as the people stand in front of the sea and I think the reason is because they watch God open the water from the other side all night and it's a little reminder that the great sun god Ra of Egypt is pathetic and during the night the Lord opens the sea from the other side and God's people walk through on dry ground you must not think this is a natural occurrence every time it's mentioned we're told there's a wall on the left and there's a wall on the right the way it's told to us is we are reminded and there are echoes of the language of creation so here is the pillar here is the presence of God hovering over the water like creation day one and then the waters are divided like creation on day two and then there's dry ground like creation day three it's quite brilliant isn't it and creation and salvation are not two separate realities both of them are achieved by God and both of them are achieved by God alone and in redeeming us

God recreates us the difference between creation and redemption is that in creation there is no opposition to God but in redemption God has to fight for us and then in an amazing moment Pharaoh and his troops pursue God's people right through the walls of water what were they thinking it's a great picture of the hardness of our hearts isn't it you know when we harden our hearts it's like a kind of a spiritual blindness and one of the lies we keep telling ourselves there's going to be no consequences for resisting God I can fight against God and nothing's going to happen verse 24 in the morning watch the Lord and the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down from the host of the Egyptians and discomfited them 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 it is the Lord who fights it is the Lord alone who fights and then he commands Moses to stretch out his hand again and the waters of the sea close over over the army of Pharaoh and his soldiers and not one single person remains and the chapter ends with these words in verse 30-31 thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the

[25 : 22] Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore and Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against Egyptians and the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses well I think clearly the people had begun to believe on the previous night I don't think they would have stepped into the sea otherwise and there's a lovely picture there of faith isn't there I mean here's a question did it make any difference when they were in the bottom of the sea whether God's people were nervous or confident I'm guessing some who went into the sea were absolutely certain and convinced of God's power and were trusting him but I'm guessing a lot of the Israelites were saying to each other we're going to die we're going to die we're going to die but they still went through because it's not the quality or the quantity or the strength of their faith it's the object of their faith and if we ask the question when does real faith come in this story the answer is right at the end after God fights after God's people realise that he alone has delivered them that's what true faith does true faith looks back to what God has done and what God alone has done and then it looks forward in trusting his word for the future faith doesn't come by trying hard to have faith you don't get up in the morning

I'm going to have faith I'm going to have faith I'm going to have faith faith comes as we look back on what God has done we see what he has done he's fought for us we see how he has done it he's done it alone because of his grace and I don't know really what Moses Elijah and Jesus I don't know the full content of their conversation on the mountain that day but if I was Moses I might have asked something like this Lord what is it that you can possibly do that will top that day at the sea I mean what rescue and deliverance what salvation could you possibly do that would come close to it and if he asked such a silly question Jesus would say something like you know Moses that day at the sea points to my death just as the Passover did and when I'm lifted up on the cross I will fight against every real enemy Satan and sin and everything that holds us in invisible chains that holds men and women captive forever and I will disarm those opponents and I will bring a freedom that is eternal and imperishable that no one can take away from you and after I am raised again everyone who lives after my resurrection will look back on my work and can trust and I have said to them I will raise them up at the last day and you know what Moses their rescue is bigger and their wilderness experience is easier than yours and the promised land is way better and that is why we sing the song salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb and that is why the lamb says they shall hunger no more this is our promised land neither thirst anymore the sun shall not strike them nor any scourging heat for the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd and

will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away all their tears from their eyes
Amen