

Exodus 14 v 13-15

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Date: 18 August 2013

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 00] We'll get a chance to meet with the visiting ministers. And, of course, we do hope to have Reverend Alston McCauley and Reverend Roddy Morrison with us over the course of next weekend.

And you will find the schedule for Sunday in the current edition of the newsletter. The session will meet after the midweek service on Wednesday.

Please note, members of session, and that will be at 8.45, and that will be in the seminary. Now, I just have a notice from Computers for Africa, and they're asking, do you have a computer or laptop under eight years old that you no longer use, and you're asked to donate it to make a difference to children in Africa?

The collection point is Stornoway High Church, and it's on Saturday, the 24th of August, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. So if you have an eight-year-old or younger computer that you no longer need, and would like to donate it to children in Africa, please take it along to Stornoway High Church on Saturday between 2 and 4.

We're going to sing together in Psalm 107. That's the traditional version of the psalm, and it's page 382. Psalm 107, and it's page 382, and we're going to sing from the beginning of the psalm.

[1 : 30] It's a traditional version. Praise God, for he is good, for still his mercies lasting be, like God's redeemed say so, whom he from the enemies handed free, and gathered them out of the lands from north, south, east, and west.

They strayed in deserts pathless way, no city found to rest. We're going to sing to the verse, Mark 8. That's the first five stanzas. Psalm 107, the traditional version.

Praise God, for he is good. Praise God, for he is good, for still his mercies lasting be, let God's redeemed say so, whom he from the enemies handed free, and gathered them out of the lands from north, south, east, and west.

They strayed in deserts pathless way, no city found to rest.

For thirst of hunger in their face, their soul, when space and rest.

[3 : 23] They cry unto the Lord, and he them free from their distress.

That we also in our way to war, that fright is he did kind.

But they might do a city go, wherein they might abide.

Oh, that men to the Lord would give praise for his goodness they, and for his works of wonder done, unto the sons of men.

Amen. Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Lord, whoever we are this evening, and whatever our circumstances, we pray that you will create within us an attitude, the right frame of mind to come to worship you and to focus upon you.

[4 : 51] Lord, we are so aware of the distractions that there are in our minds, things that we're concerned about, things that we've been doing today, and at other times, things that we have to do during the week, and various other concerns, some of them happy concerns, and some of them worries.

Father in heaven, we pray that you will give us real worship this evening, and give us to know that we are coming to meet with you in a very special way.

We meet with you when we pray privately, and when we read your word, we hear your word. Lord, and we pray, Lord, that you will impress upon us how important it is to meet with you in the secret of our own rooms on a day-to-day basis, and to exercise the discipline of prayer, keep us from believing that prayer always happens easily, because we know it doesn't.

It doesn't always come as the words don't always come to us. But, Lord, we thank you that you are able to discern what we need before we even ask.

And, indeed, there are times when words are just not there at all, and when our prayer is reduced to a groaning that the Bible calls a groaning that cannot be uttered. And yet, even then, you know everything about us, and you love us, and you love us as your people, and you are able to answer according to our needs.

[6 : 20] So, Lord, we pray that if we are plagued this evening with distractions, that you will somehow take these distractions away from us. Give us, for these few moments, to focus our minds upon the Bible and upon the words that we're singing to praise God with our heart.

First of all, we know how easy it is to do all the right things and to say the right things with our mouths and with our lips. And yet, Lord, our hearts could be far from you.

Oh, Lord, we pray that you will forbid that our hearts are elsewhere when we are supposed to be thinking about you, Lord. We pray that you will make us like your people, your genuine, believing people who worship you in spirit and in truth.

And yet, Lord, we do come to you with our troubles, Lord, and the things that weigh so heavily upon our minds. Somehow, in your providence, there are many of us this evening who are perplexed and who are troubled about various things.

Lord, there are many of us here this evening, and we pray for one another, and we also pray for ourselves. We give thanks that you are concerned with the least little things because we know that sometimes it's the little things that bother us the most.

[7 : 41] And yet, there are also things which are major, major crises and decisions and events that take place, people who we are concerned about for various reasons.

Our Father in heaven, may we bring them to you even right now in this collection of people and leave them, casting all our cares upon you because you care for us and teach us how to take our concerns to the Lord in prayer.

We ask that you will give us, at the very outset of this service, to recognize the sovereignty of God. God is without beginning and without end.

There is nothing that is impossible with you, and we are able to say that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. And so, we pray to take hold of your extraordinary, your infinite power this evening, and we pray that you will exercise that great power on our behalf.

We pray that you will hear us and answer us as we ask, Lord, for your kingdom. We remember the pattern of the Lord's Prayer, that after the disciples were to sanctify the Lord in their own hearts, they were to ask that your name were to be holy, the next item was the kingdom of God, the glory of God in all the earth.

[9 : 06] And that's what we want, Lord. We want the whole world to know you. We want, we desire more than anything else for your message to stretch across this world and to be spread across this world in great power.

And we are so aware of the impossibility of this request. And yet, Lord, look at where we are today. And if it wasn't for the power of your Holy Spirit, the church today would not be as numerous.

Our Father, we thank you for every person who has been plucked out of the fire and taken out of darkness and whose mind and heart has been changed by the Holy Spirit.

We thank you, Lord, for everyone, that we are only a small part of a vast body of people, that one day will be a multitude that no one was able to number, standing before your throne.

And we pray for the growth of that. We pray that your kingdom will come and that your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We, Lord, we think of areas of the world in which there is such conflict, and yet there is also conflict on the inside.

[10 : 18] There is a spiritual conflict taking place. We think tonight of the Middle East, the Middle Eastern countries that seem to be so torn and in such turmoil and in chaos because of the inward conflict, the civil war that seems to be taking place in Syria and in Egypt in particular, in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places as well where there is tension, and perhaps that tension will one day come to the surface.

Our Father in heaven, these men and women are fellow human beings suffering greatly and in great pain and anguish because of what is happening.

And our Father in heaven, we pray, Lord, for a lasting settlement. We pray for those whose responsibility it is to try and bring order in such chaos.

But we know, Lord, that no lasting peace will come to this world without the gospel. So we pray for every effort that's made, particularly this night focusing on the Middle East.

We think of our brother Adam, who will shortly be with us here in Stornoway and the work which he continues to do in your service. We pray for him, Lord.

[11 : 37] We ask that he may know that his labor in the Lord is blessed and it's fruitful. We ask, we pray for him and ask that he may be strengthened in his work.

We thank you for the continuation of that work. And we pray that he may see, that he may have the joy of seeing men and women coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Father, we pray for our own part of the world, a very different place where on the one hand there is such civilization and where there is peace and stability.

And yet on the other hand, there is a turning away, a rejection of your truth. Our Father, we pray that that will change and that you will reverse the tide of secularism and atheism that has taken hold of so many people.

And we ask, Lord, that you will give us the strength to know that you are all powerful. And the gospel today is as much the power of God to salvation as it ever was. And so we pray for every place where we are witnesses.

[12 : 44] We pray for our own church here. And Lord, we pray for those who are visiting with us, that they will be blessed in their own witness and that you will accompany the gospel in every part of this country in great power.

We pray for our own witness. And we ask that you will make us faithful, that you will keep us faithful, keep us standing firm in our own conduct and in our behavior and bless our witness.

We pray for our friends who are as yet not Christians. We pray for our family who as yet haven't taken that step of faith. Those we're concerned about, our neighbors, our community, our people that we work with.

Lord, give us to pray in faith. Give us, Lord, to look for opportunities to say a word in season and give us the right frame of mind to await your spirit.

Lead us and guide us in everything that we do. Bless the days that lie ahead, we pray, in our own congregation and in other congregations that are about to remember the Lord's death in communion.

[13 : 46] We pray that this will be a time of refreshing for all of us. We pray that it will be a time when people will be strengthened and challenged in their own lives. Our Father in heaven, bless these days to us and those who are going to come and minister your word to us.

Forgive all our sin. In Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to sing again, and this time we're going to turn to the new Psalms, and Psalm 46a.

It's on page 60. Amen.

Psalm 46a. And we're going to sing from the seventh to the end of the Psalm. The Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain.

For Jacob's God, our strong defense and fortress will remain. Come see the works the Lord has done, the judgments He commands, the desolations He has brought to pass in many lands.

[14 : 51] Verse 7 to verse 11 of Psalm 46a, the Lord Almighty is with us. The Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain.

For Jacob's daughter's song, reference, and fortress will remain.

Come see the words the Lord has done, the judgments he commands.

The desolations he has brought to us in many lands.

In every land throughout the earth, he makes all conflicts cease.

[16 : 12] He shatters no one's steel and shield, and with this frame of peace.

Be still and know that I am God, all earth exalted high.

And all the nations of the world, my name will glorify.

The Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain.

For Jacob's daughter's song, defense, and fortress will remain.

[17 : 24] We're going to read tonight in the Old Testament book of Exodus, chapter 14. That's on page 67, the second book of the Bible, Exodus, and chapter 14.

Reading at the beginning of the chapter, When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled. And the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed towards the people.

And they said, What is this we have done that we have let Israel go from serving us? So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him. And took 600 chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

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 Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army.

[19 : 12] And overtook them encamped by the sea by Pi-Hiroth in front of Baal-Zephon. 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. They said to Moses, Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken as a way 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? 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.

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. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry to me?

[20 : 19] 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 get glory over Pharaoh and all his hosts, his chariots and his horsemen, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when 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 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. 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 on 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 Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen.

[21 : 36] And in the morning watched 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. And 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.

The waters returned and covered the chariots and horsemen of all the host 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 that the Lord used against the Egyptians.

[22 : 45] So the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and his servant Moses. Amen. And we pray, as always, when we read God's word, that he will speak to us with his own unique power.

We're going to sing together in Psalm 124. That's the traditional version of the psalm. You'll find it on page 418 in the Sing Psalms books.

Psalm 124, and it's the second version of the psalm. Psalm 124. Now Israel may say, And that truly, if that the Lord had not our cause maintained, if that the Lord had not our right sustained, when cruel men against us furiously rose up in wrath to make of us their praise.

Psalm 124, page 418. And we're going to stand to sing the whole of the psalm. Psalm 124, page 518.

Christ 618. And we're going to bye, Jane Ho■■■■■ and W Scientific Sexip's Conference talk mont hacen supposedly360. to make of us their great.

[24 : 26] Then certainly they have given us all, and so quick for all that we could deem, such was their rage as the night-cally steam, and the spirits passed before their morning's round, so had they brought us home to death while we done.

Our raging streams with their burnt swelling waves, and then our soul full of redness in the deep, but lest be not good of us safely keep, and hath not given us for a living way, unto their teeth and bloody cruelty.

Even as the bird out of the fowler's share, he steps away, so is our souls set free.

Broke are their nets, and the seascape and weep, therefore our health is in the Lord's great name, who heaven and earth by his great power did reign.

Let's turn together to the chapter that we read previously, the book of Exodus, chapter 14, verse 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.

[27 : 07] For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry to me?

Tell the people of Israel to go forward. This chapter has got to be one of the most tense chapters in the Bible.

I often try to imagine someone reading the Bible for the first time, and reading through this story of how the Israelites were led by Moses out of Egypt, where they had been kept for 400 years as slaves.

And at this point, I don't believe that you would be able to put the Bible down. You would be in such, you would be so eager to discover what the end of the story was.

You could never leave it at that point. How are all these people, two million of them, on the run from the army of the most powerful empire in the world at that time, and at a dead end, faced with a vast sea without any boats, how are they going to escape that circumstance?

[28 : 45] Well, you have to read on, of course, to the end of the chapter to find out. And we've done that, and we've seen how God miraculously divided the waters of the Red Sea, creating a path with a wall of sea to one side and a wall of sea to the other so that the people of Israel could cross on dry ground.

I suppose this is one of those passages in which you're challenged as to whether you believe this or not. Everyone knows how utterly impossible this is.

It is impossible for a sea to divide and for people to walk with a wall of water on one side and a wall of water on the other.

We all know it's impossible. The question is not how impossible it is. The question is, do you believe that the living God acted in miracle working power in order to save his people?

I believe it. And if you're a Christian and you're following Christ, then you will believe it with me. But that is the story. Nevertheless, however miraculous this was, it still was a hugely tense moment as you can feel.

[30 : 03] You can't go through this chapter without feeling in some measure what the Israelites felt as they had to stand still, frozen to the spot, terrified in fear, not knowing where to turn or who to turn to.

And having reacted foolishly and badly and blamed the Lord for having taken them this far. Now, of course, I'm sure that most of us here will know the story of how the children of Israel had been kept in Egypt.

They had been used as slaves to build cities for various pharaohs as they had come to the throne. And they had been treated with immense cruelty by the Egyptians.

As a result of that, they cried to the Lord and the Lord raised up Moses. You know the story of the Moses, the baby in the bulrushes and how he had been brought up in the palace and how he had murdered someone and he had left the country and he had met God in the flames of the burning bush.

How God had sent him back to Pharaoh and how God had sent 10 plagues culminating in the plague of the firstborn. And it was only at that point that finally Pharaoh had allowed the people to

leave Egypt with all their possessions and indeed possessions they took from their neighbors in Egypt at the same time.

[31 : 28] But Pharaoh changed his mind when he realized what had happened and he realized he had lost his labor force. He changed his mind and went out after the people of Israel in order to take them back and I'm quite sure that in the process of his intentions that he would have killed many of the Israelites because he would have held them responsible for the death of every firstborn son amongst the Egyptians.

And so it wasn't like the army of Egypt was simply going to negotiate with them in some way and to gently lead them back into Egypt. Pharaoh's terms were non-negotiable.

And it's not surprising that they were rooted to the spot absolutely terrified as they watched the army of Pharaoh making its way from a distance becoming closer and closer to them.

Now tonight I want us to not simply look at the facts of this story I want us to see how this story and indeed the journey the subsequent journey through the wilderness to the promised land it helps us to understand what it means to live in faith and to live in dependence upon God.

I want us to see the various elements of the life of faith in which God day by day moment by moment is teaching his people how to live in obedience to him and that was not an easy way to live.

[33 : 11] The whole of the book of Exodus is the struggle it tells of the struggle that there was in God teaching his people how he required them to live and their own reaction to his commandments and that was because they were stubborn and because they wanted their own way and because they often reacted to God very much according to the way in which they saw things rather than stopping and asking well how does God see things and why don't we trust in him so the whole of this this account it tells us of element after element as to how God wanted his people and commanded them to live and as such it has often been seen as a representation of the Christian life and that's the way I'd like to look at it this evening the Christian life beginning when there is that decisive moment of conversion where a person is delivered out of the guilt and the clutches of sin well that's what the Passover was all about and the way in which Israel was led out of Egypt the Bible often describes

God's salvation as a deliverance and that's what we are God sent his son into the world to deliver us and to rescue us from the power and from the guilt of sin and so we can look back as God's people today and we can see how similar this account is to the way in which we have been cleansed and changed and brought out of slavery because like it or not that's the way our lives were and that's the way your life is if you haven't come to know Jesus as your saviour you may not realise it but God tells us that we are slaves slaves to a master you may not agree with me that you are a slave to anyone you may think that you have free will and free choice in this world well I have bad news for you you don't you are a slave just like the children of Israel were until that moment when they cried out to the Lord and when Moses threw the agency of Moses the people were delivered it must have been an absolutely massive event if you had been there this wasn't something that was that was insignificant this was a major historical event but it meant a total change in the lifestyle of the people of Israel despite the fact that they had spent the last 400 years as slaves and many of them had suffered the cruelty of the

Egyptian soldiers and Pharaoh nevertheless they lived in relative security and so whilst on one hand they cried out to the Lord to set them free from their oppression yet the Bible goes on to tell us that there were times when the people would have been willing to consider going back weighing up all the options so as they faced a future where they were free from their slavery that freedom was that meant for them a life in which from now on they would have to depend day by day on the leading and the guiding of God every single day so what that meant was that where they knew before that they lived in the same house they ate the same food they did the same things they went out in the morning to work and they came back at night time and they had families and children and so on no matter how cruel the Egyptians were they knew that it was the same routine that every day would be like the day before now they didn't know what each day would bring because they were going to be led into an unknown place they had never been in this wilderness before they had never been out of

Egypt before now they had to leave behind what they knew and what they were familiar with I wonder if that's something you think about when you think about the gospel tonight the gospel demands that you have to leave behind what you're familiar with and that's something that you find incredibly difficult to think about because we're all attached to this world our own world aren't we

we're all so attached to it it means so much to us and when we read Jesus saying that if any man would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily then that's a different story isn't it that's a real challenge and maybe many of you tonight are simply not prepared to take God at his word and to take that step of faith because you prefer what you're familiar with even although you know that it's a life that will result in death and punishment you find it almost impossible to let go well with God's help only with God's help will you be able to let go of that life you see when a person is converted it's a miracle God so works in that person's life that he breaks the bones that we have with our own world and what we're familiar with and he changes our minds and our desire and our will and creates within us a new person and it's only as a new person that you'll be able and I would like to think that you tonight will be asking God Lord I don't understand what's being said and yet there's something in this that I can't get away from and I need you to show me one way or the other what the way ahead is when you come to [39 : 39] God simply and in faith like that God will do it God will do it but like the Israelites you have to be prepared for a radical change in your life that's what the Christian life is it's a radical change from now on the old things have gone said the apostle Paul the new everything has become new I find that fantastic whatever you do don't when you're thinking of the Christian life if you haven't if you haven't come to Christ if you haven't come to Christ the likelihood is that you're probably thinking very negatively about what it is to be a Christian let me tell you now the Christian life is a life full I'm not saying it's easy and I'm not saying it's without its troubles and its challenges and its difficulties but I wouldn't be anywhere else this evening

I tell you with all honesty I wouldn't be anywhere else but in the care of Jesus Christ to me that's when living begins when you trust in Jesus Christ that's when real life begins so this meant a number of things for the people of Israel it meant first of all a journey which depended on God's promise alone the promise of God was that he was going to lead them through the wilderness and he was going to bring them one day to the promised land a land he said flowing with milk and honey and they were settling that land because it was the land that he promised to Abraham Isaac and Jacob but that was his promise alone they left Egypt on the strength of that promise alone and that's where faith begins it begins by listening to what God says in his promises to us but it meant also secondly being guided by God himself day by day meant having to let go of their own sense of security and the things that they depended on for their security day by day and it meant having to be led by God day by day in the cloud you remember how he led them we're told in chapter 13 and at the end of chapter 13 that God created us a visible representation of a cloud a massive dark pillar of cloud that moved ahead and at night time it changed into a pillar of fire so that the people would see and wherever this cloud went they didn't know from one week to the other where the cloud would lead them there's something within us as human beings that wants to know the future don't we we like to know what we're going to be doing next week some people more than others we like to plan ahead and of course in a sense there's nothing wrong with that in so far as we keep diaries we make appointments and so on but to a large extent the Christian life at root is a life where we do not know what a day or an hour may bring and we're led we're being led by the Lord from day to day I don't know about you I find that exciting I find that thrilling to know that God is leading and he has a plan and there are ways in which God and I'll tell you now particularly if you're a younger person you think that your life is mapped out in a direction and you maybe think you know or you think you want your life to be mapped out in a particular direction well if you trust the Lord then don't be surprised when that direction changes to something completely different to what you expected but God will make you willing to do that he'll make you thrilled with it he'll make you want it that's the way God works but it also meant for the people of Israel believing that whatever God was doing even if it wasn't what they thought he would do or what they expected it meant believing that somehow it was the right thing if you go back into chapter 13 you'll discover that there was a short way to the promised land and there was a long way to the promised land and we'll read that God deliberately chose not to lead them by the short way but he chose to lead them by the long way now the first reaction to that is well why would God do that surely he would want to make things as plain and as simple as possible for his people for the comfort and for the safety of his people well the safety of people as far as God was concerned was never an issue God was protecting them and no matter what outward danger they appeared to be in they were actually never in any real danger because the safest place you can ever possibly be is following the Lord if God be for us who can be against us says the apostle and

he certainly knew what danger was all about and it's still the same in every generation if God you can say it I can say it tonight whatever we face if God be for us who can be against us now there was a short way and a long way God chose the long way and when I tell you that the Philistines lived in the short path and they would have had to go through Philistine enemy territory to go on the short way then you say to me well I understand now of course

God was protecting his people against the Philistines but that's not the reason it wasn't the Philistines God could have dealt with the Philistines like that it wasn't that wasn't the reason we're told that God knew that if his people came if they tried to get through Philistine territory that they would become afraid and they would turn back to Egypt he knew his own people and it was for their sakes because he knew how they would react in such fear that he chose to bring them round the long way you see God knows us he knows their temperaments our limitations and God acts according to who we are because he always does what's best for us but sometimes what is best for us is not what we think it's going to be or what we expect it to be we have to learn day by day to take a step back and say he is the

[46 : 34] Lord let him do what is right in his own sight and that's a real tough one you had to learn that you had to learn that on several different occasions but what I really want to focus on in the next few minutes is this in this chapter it meant this that just when the people thought that everything was finished life had only just begun just when they thought that they could take a massive sigh of relief having been rescued out of the cruelty of Egypt and having been set free by the power of God just when they expected and I guess they would have expected maybe a time of rejoicing and celebration a time to enjoy their new found freedom just as they were about to start settling in their minds and start being happy for the first time in 400 years what did they discover that for a while things were actually even worse than they had been previously and they were utterly utterly terrified when they looked behind and when they saw that they had been led into a place where the army of Pharaoh was pursuing them and they knew full well what the intentions of the army of Pharaoh would have been now you and I would have been just as terrified terrified I certainly would have been and at a loss to know why I'd been brought into this place and what was going to happen we would we we didn't we and you didn't let me ask you this why was it that the people of God were terrified terrified the people of God were terrified because they were God's people think about it if they had been

Egyptians they wouldn't have been terrified they would have been amongst the Egyptians if there'd been some other people they would have they would lived in some other city some other way they were lived by their own culture their own language and they wouldn't be terrified the reason that they stood shaking in their shoes was because they were God's people and I say this because sometimes people have this romanticized notion of what it's like to be a Christian and they believe that once I start trusting Christ then everything is going to settle down and everything is going to fall into its right place and I'm going to know the peace of God that passes all understanding well you will but the way we understand that is sometimes that everything is going to be peaceful and life is going to be so straightforward now that I've been saved I will know how to live properly I'll never have to deal with temptation anymore the kind of temptation that I always had to deal with as an unbeliever and you have so many expectations of what the

Christian life is all about when you get there you discover that you're terrified and that there's a battle there's an enemy that is pursuing you even more vigorously and viciously than he's ever pursued you in the past and that enemy who has fought so hard to keep you in his kingdom is going to fight equally hard to destroy you now that you are a Christian that's a terrible discovery isn't it it's a fearful discovery because once again it places you in the position where you don't know where to turn and you feel afraid and you feel that where can I what can I do and you feel vulnerable and insecure and then you feel well I can't be a Christian even if I feel like this that doesn't mean you're not a Christian the reason why these people were afraid was because they belong to the Lord and I wonder if tonight there's anyone here in that position where you feel that things have not worked out as you expected them as a Christian and you feel you're on shaky ground and you feel I shouldn't feel like this I shouldn't be like this I shouldn't be in this position

I should be in control has it ever occurred to you that you're experiencing that because not because you're not a Christian but because you are a Christian and because but because the Lord is doing something and it's hard and it's painful and it's some way in which God is showing you and leading you his way and not your way and you know when that kind of event takes place where we're

shown our own weakness and when God removes all the props from us everything that we would otherwise depend on and you're left on your own depending on God alone you may be afraid you may feel vulnerable and insecure but let me tell you this if you come to the Lord and if you trust in him exclusively as you've never done before and God will bless you through that I can tell you this again I'm sometimes personal with yourselves I wouldn't be personal with other people at all but personal with you you know some of the times in my Christian life when I've been more blessed than any other times are the times of crisis and I'm sure many of you who are older Christians you will agree with me in that times when you have found refuge in the Lord as never before and when you've prayed as you've never prayed before you see it's so easy isn't it to use the right words in prayer and to come to the Lord with the same phrases we've developed a list as long as you're Aram of words that we always use in prayer words that sound good and appropriate sometimes we use these words without really thinking but I'll tell you when you're in a time of crisis like the Israelites where you really pray you pray as you've never prayed before and it's at that time that the Lord brings you close to himself is that right isn't that right it's at the times when you actually do not know what tomorrow's going to bring you don't know how God's going to work this out but you know he has to because you belong to him one thing is absolutely sure you say [53 : 57] I belong to the Lord this is the one being that I can trust everything else is changing and falling apart around me but I can come to the Lord and I know that he loves me whatever I feel and whatever I'm going through I know that he loves me and he'll take me through this and he will open the doors his own doors not the doors I want him to open but the doors that he will open for me and that's faith that's faith that's when you really trust in him and put your trust in him as never before it meant also discovering your own badness look at what the children of Israel did as a first reaction to their fear at seeing the army pursuing them they reacted irrationally they began to complain what did they say what have you done to us bringing us out of Egypt is not this we said to you when we were in Egypt leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians it would be better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness they completely lost sight of the fact that stared them in the face which was this that the same

God who had delivered them out of Egypt was the God who was going to continue to do you think for a moment that the Lord who has brought you to this place tonight is not going to take care of the future it doesn't matter what obstacles there are what mountains there are in front of you do you not believe that God will take care of them he will move heaven and earth in order to do his will and to accomplish his own love for you but instead of that instead of taking a step back and trying to see the big picture and trying to react in faith they react irrationally they begin to complain I wonder sometimes when I hear people complaining and I talk to myself as well I sometimes complain I hear other people complaining something that people do some more than others I wonder sometimes when I hear people complaining I wonder sometimes if sometimes the complaint says more about themselves than it says about what they are complaining about I can understand the people here reacting irrationally out of fear but sadly this became a feature of the children of Israel as they were led through the wilderness every time they came across a situation that they didn't like or that didn't suit them they rose up against

Moses they complained again and again and again and often when we complain it's because we are at a standstill spiritually maybe not always but when we complain it very often betrays the fact that we've lost sight of how we should trust in God because wherever we are tonight God has taken us there God's in control and when we complain we're saying God's not in control and we need to take a step back and say yes he is he is in control whether it looks like it or not he's there so it meant discovering your own badness and it's never an easy thing to discover your own badness but don't be surprised when it happens if you're a Christian tonight not just once you've already discovered it that's why you've come to Christ but then you discover it again even aspects of your character you never realized before the Christian life is full of new discoveries and they're sometimes ugly and painful where we have to face things about ourselves that are shameful and horrific sometimes you're forced you're tempted to think

I can't be a Christian because I'm seeing things about myself aspects of my character I've never seen before it's worse than I ever thought that's the way that God works in you that's the way in which God shows us how to die to sin because every time we come across some other feature that is more ugly than the last feature what do we do with it do we not come to Jesus do we not confess it do we not ask that the Lord will take away our pride and our sinfulness and our shamefulness and

work within us and he promises to do so he who has begun a good work in you says Philippians he who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion that's the promise that we lay hold about tonight but lastly the time is gone this meant standing still and moving forward standing still and moving forward now I know what you're going to say well that's a contradiction I'm only saying it that way in order for it to stick in our minds because it does appear to be a contradiction doesn't it there are no real contradictions in the Bible by the way but sometimes there are apparent contradictions in order for us to think about it and here's one of them for the children of Israel to trust in the Lord meant standing still and moving forward they first of all had to stand still that's what Moses says fear not stand firm see the salvation of the Lord that was their first command in other words they were to take their eyes away from the enemy they were to stop complaining they were to stop doing everything else and they were to think and they were to see you can only see when you focus your eyes in a particular direction they were to look they weren't to do anything I'm sure that every one of them were was tempted to what can I do what will I do and they knew that they could do anything they were they were frozen to the spot that was the moment when God said to them don't do anything don't do anything they hadn't done anything so far [60:12] God had done everything for them from the plagues he had sent Moses and God had sent the plagues of frogs and of lice and of disease and darkness and blood and all the other plagues that God had sent he had done the whole thing the Israelites only needed to to be still and to watch the marvels of God devastating the pride and the power of Egypt their enemy and now in their terror God was saying don't do anything you know when you think about it that's what the Christian faith is that's where it begins that's what it's all about when people think of religion they think about what I do what I must do how diligent I am how obedient I am whether I tick all the right boxes but the Christian faith is entirely different God says to us don't do anything you can't do anything for yourself the only way to be right with

God is what I have done says God not what you can do you can't do anything tells us we're dead and trespasses and sins we're just as enslaved as these poor Israelites were in Egypt and yet it was him that acted it's the same with the gospel the same with Jesus it's not about what we can do to make ourselves right with God it's about what Jesus has done in coming into this world God becoming man tonight let us stand still and see the salvation of the Lord and I say that particularly I could say it any night I hope I would say this at any time but I'm conscious of the fact that we're going to be sitting at the Lord's table next Lord's day what will we be doing we will be standing still and we will be seeing the salvation of God the Bible often uses the idea of looking by way of believing that's what it means when we look we don't just observe as a spectator we look in amazement and in trust and in faith at what

God has done in the Lord Jesus Christ God becoming man God says stand and look God man teaching the people and healing and working from town to village and then being arrested and being brought and being mocked and lashed the crown of thorns being placed upon his head this is God and man and he is suffering as no one has ever suffered in the past being nailed to a Roman cross having done nothing to deserve it and having done only God's will his whole life in this world because on the cross God was reconciling you and me to himself in his death he was pouring out his anger and his wrath upon him and he was suffering the wrath of God so that we could be rescued and so there could be an exodus with you and I and so that we could be delivered to be with God and to be in fellowship with him

God says stand still and see the salvation of God stand still and see the salvation of God if you're not a Christian tonight stand still don't say what must I do I'm sure I hope you are I hope you are but that's the whole point when the man asked what must I do to be saved Paul said believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved that was the answer what does that mean it means stand still you can't do anything stand still and look at what God has done and accept it but when God spoke to the people he said move on having stood still their first first command was to stand still whoever we are this evening that's

God's command to us in the very first place he wants to show us himself have you ever asked the Lord show me who you are show me what you've done have you ever honestly asked the Lord that in the secret of your own heart have you ever asked the Lord show me what salvation is all about and show me what you've done in Jesus Christ can I so recommend can I so suggest that that is your first prayer show me what you've done let me see I want to look I want to understand I want to gaze I really really want to know only God can show you and then they were to move on they were

to move on they were to go forward they were to take a step on the strength of what they had seen they were to take those steps forward so that they could make use what was the use of God dividing the Red Sea if none of them were prepared to take a step into the [65 : 44] Red Sea that would have been madness it would have been illogical of course they were going to take that step it was only sensible it was only they wouldn't even have thought about it of course they were going to do it and yet we're so reluctant to take the steps that God asks us to take beginning with this do in remembrance of me let me guess this evening you know I guess there are three types of person there are those of you who have every intention of sitting at the Lord's table next week because you love the Lord and you wouldn't even consider not doing because you want to be there and you want to remember his death until he comes there are others and you have absolutely no intention of ever sitting at the Lord's table because he means nothing to you you're here tonight because perhaps you have a slight measured interest in the gospel but really when it comes to your own commitment there is none well I hope

God changes that and I hope that you listen to the Lord and I hope that you respond in faith one day even tonight itself but there's another sect there are another category of people and they are believers I'm going to speak to you tonight just two minutes because the time has gone you for you communion is not a good Sunday you feel troubled about communion in fact you're not looking forward to it in fact it may be that you you won't go to communion you won't attend even because you feel so perplexed about it and the reason you feel so perplexed is because you know you should be there you haven't taken that step perhaps you're confused as to what point someone should come to the table sooner or later or at what point in your Christian life perhaps you're conscious of your own failures you're afraid perhaps of what the future might hold is this sounding familiar to you with regard to the chapter we've just read perhaps you're at a point in your Christian life where you want to go back listen let me tell you this whatever you do you can't go back the children of Israel that's the one thing they couldn't do is to go back you because that's God's option it's his invitation it's the step of faith it's the step in which you make Christ known whatever the future might hold whatever misgivings and confusions you have do it because the Lord is inviting you and commanding you to do so and that should be enough stand still see the salvation of God and take that step forward with all of God's people let's pray our Father in heaven bless your word to us we thank you for it we thank you for the way in which we are challenged in it whatever point we're at in our Christian lives we are always challenged by your word but we're also strengthened and comforted by it we thank you so much

Lord for giving it to us and we pray that you will forgive all our sin now and prepare us for the days that lie ahead in Jesus name amen Psalm 114 my apology for taking too long this evening Psalm 114 and it's on page 152 it's the Psalm version that is the Psalm that tells us of how Israel came out of Egypt and how God parted the Red Sea it's a Psalm in which it's described in poetic language just what we've been reading Psalm 114 page 152 when Israel out of Egypt came from people of a foreign tongue then Judah was God's holy place and Israel was sent his throne the whole of the Psalm four verses Psalm 114 and we're going to stand to sing in gospel imp In Israel was set its throne. The steeply hell has swiftly fled.

[70 : 44] The Jordan River turned away. The lofty mountains skimmed like rocks.

The hills like little lambs had claimed. O sea, why was it that you fled?

Why Jordan did you turn away? Why mountains did you skip like rocks?

Through hills like little lambs of clay. Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, Before the face of Jacob's God, Who turned the rock into a pool, From solid ground that waters flow.

And now may the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Rest on and abide with each one of us, Both now and always.

[72 : 26] Amen. Amen.