

Text: Exodus 14:15-31

Title: "God's Power on Display"

INTRODUCTION

As I begin this morning I want to ask you to be in prayer for our students as they bring to a close Disciple Now Weekend. They have been meeting together in homes all across our city, and I know the Lord is doing great things. Also, we look forward next Sunday to a special guest preacher, Dr. Geoff Hammonds, the President of the North American Mission Board. Many of us were introduced to Geoff last fall as we prayed for 40 days for our nation. Geoff was one of the men God used to rally us to pray. He'll be preaching in both services; then he'll speak at our Missions Forum that occurs next Sunday evening. You can get the details in your worship folder.

Open your Bible with me to Exodus 15. We've been learning from God's dealings with the Israelites here on the pages of Exodus. I've entitled this series "Delivered!" That is what God is doing for His people ... delivering them. That word "delivered" signals to us that when it comes to being released from the chains and the stains of sin, we cannot do it ourselves. Only God can take us out of the old way of life that lead to death, and take us into a new life found ultimately in Jesus Christ.

Now we come to one of the most memorable events in the entire Bible. Israel has marched boldly out of Egypt as Pharaoh, under the hand of God's judgment, finally relents and lets them go. But God does something unexpectedly ... as He often does. He lead them out into the desert and has them camp on the shores of the Red Sea ... not the typical route you would take if escaping Egypt. Pharaoh sees what is happening and he pursues them. He's licking his chops because he knows he can hem them in against the Red Sea. So with the Israelites facing the Red Sea on one side and the powerful Egyptian army on the other side, the Israelites start complaining to Moses and to God. But actually the stage is set for a great display of God's power in behalf of His people.

Read Exodus 15:15-18.

Now the animators in the film "The Prince of Egypt" did an amazingly accurate job of depicting what happens here on the pages of Scripture. So for those of you who are more visual learners, watch this:

ILLUSTRATION – Video clip from "The Prince of Egypt"

ILLUSTRATION – We have a basketball goal on our driveway. We have had some great basketball games back there through the years. One game we love to play is HORSE. That's the game where a group of people shoot the basketball in order. One person shoots a shot ... whatever shot they want to shoot. But they must call their shot. If it goes in, the person next in the rotation has to make the shot. It's one thing for someone to be goofing around and throw up a shot and it goes in by accident or luck. But it's another thing for someone to call their shot ... behind the back off the glass ... and it goes in!

EXAMPLE: Just like before Jesus' death on the Cross, He called His shot. He told His disciples that after His death He would be buried and that He would arise from the dead on the third day ... and He did!

Well God called His shot here with the Israelites. He announces in advance the great miracle He will perform.

He tells Moses...

Exodus 14:16 (NIV) - Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

Moses was to raise his staff, but God will do the hard part:

Exodus 14:17 (NIV) - I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.

Exodus 14:18 (NIV) - The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

Now at the end of the chapter Moses (the Holy Spirit-inspired author of Exodus) sums up what happened:

Exodus 14:29 (NIV) - But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Exodus 14:30 (NIV) - That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore.

Exodus 14:31 (NIV) - And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

So all of this is God's power on display. And as a result it says that the people both feared God and put their trust in Him, and in Moses.

Now God's power on display teaches us these lessons:

1. GOD CARES FOR HIS PEOPLE (vv.19-20).

This all started when the Israelites cried out to God in their bondage and oppression. And the Lord responded:

Exodus 3:7 (NIV) - The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

You need to know this. When you are facing whatever *bondage* is chasing you and whatever *barrier* is before you, know that God cares for His people.

Look at the way God demonstrates this here in vv.19-20:

Exodus 14:19-20 (NIV) - Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

There is a clear distinction here between what happens for the people of God and what happens for the enemies of God.

God's power on display here in Exodus 14 is something biblical writers will come back to time after time in order to encourage His people to put their trust in His unfailing love ... in places like Psalm 136. The psalmist recounts the great activity of God, and the reply is "His love endures forever." I want you to say that each time it appears in the verses. Ready?

Psalm 136:1 (NIV) - Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:2 (NIV) - Give thanks to the God of gods. *His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:3 (NIV) - Give thanks to the Lord of lords: *His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:13 (NIV) - to him who divided the Red Sea asunder *His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:14 (NIV) - and brought Israel through the midst of it, *His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:15 (NIV) - but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; *His love endures forever.*

Psalm 136:16 (NIV) - to him who led his people through the desert, *His love endures forever.*

QUOTE: The great 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon said this: "The Lord will make a way for you where no foot has been before. That which, like a sea, threatens to drown you, shall be a highway for your escape."

The God who brings you *to* the Red Sea is the God who will bring you *through* the Red Sea. God cares for His people.

2. GOD DEALS WITH HIS ENEMIES (vv.19-20).

So the pillar of cloud that was leading the Israelites on their journey moves around behind them. Later we're told that the cloud was actually an angel. So this angel stands between the people of God and the enemies of God. On the side of the people of God there is light through the night. On the other side for the enemy there was darkness.

The Israelites can trust God. His enemies better fear Him. Because the same incident that *delivered* the people God, *destroyed* the enemies of God.

That is going to be true at the Second Coming of Christ. In that singular event Christ will *deliver* the church and He will *destroy* His enemies. So you better be sure you're on the right side.

But this display of God's power teaches us something else:

3. NATURE ANSWERS TO GOD.

Just look at how God orchestrates this in a super-natural way:

Exodus 14:21-22 (NIV) - Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Now I believe this is the way it really happened. Liberal scholars through the years have tried to *dismiss* this by saying it really didn't happen. Or they try to *discredit* the biblical record by saying that it didn't happen that way. Miracles like this simply can't happen. There must have been a natural explanation for all of this.

ILLUSTRATION - I read about a little boy who went to Sunday School. At lunch his mother asked, 'Son, what did they teach you today in Sunday School?' He said, 'Well, they told the story of how Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land.' She said, 'Well, tell me about it.' The Son said, 'That night Moses got on the radio and told all the people in Egypt that the Israelites were going to come out that night at a certain time. When the signal was given flares were shot into the sky signaling all the Israelites to start out in their armored cars. They went across the desert and airplanes gave them protection and cover. They came to the Red Sea and there was no way they could cross it. Pharaoh was coming with his tanks and so Moses built a pontoon bridge and started across. They got to the other side and while Pharaoh was on the bridge, Moses blew it up, and Pharaoh and his troops all drowned in the Red Sea; and Moses and the children of Israel were saved.' His mother looked at him and said, 'Now Son, did your Sunday School teacher really tell you all that?' He said, 'Well, not exactly. But Mom, if I told it to you the way she told it to us you would never believe it.'

Now if you don't believe in a God who *created* and *controls* the universe, then naturally you will have problems with this. But for those of us who believe that God created this universe and that nature answers to God, we don't have a problem with this kind of thing happening.

EXAMPLE: Remember the account in the Gospels of how Jesus and His disciples got in the boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. Immediately Jesus went to sleep. Then a storm came up, so fierce that it threatened to swamp the boat. But Jesus slept. They quickly awakened Jesus and cried, “Lord save us! We’re going to drown!”

Matthew 8:26-27 (NIV) - He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

This is cause for the fear of God. When we see the awesomeness of nature ... the fury ... the beauty ... the complexity ... and we realize that God *created* it and *controls* it ... that should cause us to fear God. Creation is God’s power on display.

Now there’s another lesson we learn here.

4. GOD KEEPS HIS WORD.

Just look at this:

Exodus 14:23-25 (NIV) - The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea.²⁴ During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion.²⁵ He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.”

Isn’t that exactly what God said would happen when He reassured the Israelites back in vv.13-14.

Exodus 14:13-14 (NIV) - “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today ... The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

The story continues...

Exodus 14:27-28 (NIV) - Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

Again, isn’t that exactly what God promised them?

Exodus 14:13 (NIV) - “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.

Now we're told in v.31 how the people responded ... and it's a signal to us of how we should respond when we read things like this in our Bibles.

Exodus 14:31 (NIV) - And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

What did they do?

- When they saw God's dealings with His enemies, they feared the Lord. From time to time we need to be *warned* that, as Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."
- It says that when they saw this great display of God's power they put their trust in Him, and in His servant Moses. From time to time we need to be *encouraged* to put our hope in God and in His certain promises.