

ESF, Lord's day service message  
2/26/2017

## **Overcoming Crisis**

Exodus 14:1-22

<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. <sup>3</sup> Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.’ <sup>4</sup> And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” So the Israelites did this.

<sup>5</sup> When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!” <sup>6</sup> So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. <sup>7</sup> He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. <sup>8</sup> The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. <sup>9</sup> The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

<sup>10</sup> As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

*<sup>13</sup> Moses answered the people, “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. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*

*<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.”*

*<sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> 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.*

*<sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.*

The Israelites got out of slavery in Egypt by way of God’s miraculous deliverance. They believed that God was leading them to freedom. But, before long, they were trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea. There was no escape. They faced a hopeless crisis. Did they perish in the crisis then? No! In the crisis, God performed a miracle and delivered them from the crisis.

Sometimes, we may be in a similar situation as the Israelites’. We may face a difficult situation where we can’t go either forward or backward.

What is your “Egyptian army” or your “Red Sea”? in your life today? Is there anything that terrifies you? Do you see that there is no way out? Then, listen to what the Lord is saying to you today. With this story of miraculous deliverance, He teaches you how to overcome a crisis.

### **By depending on nothing or no one but God**

The Israelites were terrified at the Egyptian army and the Red Sea. They thought they were going to either be crushed by the Egyptian army or drowned in the sea. They thought that they faced a hopeless crisis after they followed God’s guidance. And they complained: *Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!*” (verses 11-12).

We may think the same way as they thought if we face a similar crisis while we follow the Lord. But God did not put them there for the reason they thought. God led them into that situation not to let them perish but to cause them to depend upon nothing or no one but God. God wanted to discipline them to completely trust in Him in all situations.

Moses believed in this plan of God. So, when they complained to Moses, Moses did not discourage them. Moses encouraged them to trust in God’s deliverance: *"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. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still"* (verses 13-14).

God may lead us through difficult trials. But His intention is always to do something good for us. Through difficulties, God encourages us to depend upon Him. If there is no crisis in our lives, we may not seriously depend upon God's help. If we don't face crisis from time to time, we may not pray to God seriously. So, sometimes God may use

crisis to get our attention, to discipline us to depend upon Him and to be victorious not by our power but by His power.

When we are down to our last dime and all the bills are due and there is no way to solve a financial crisis, we learn to depend upon God's provision. When there is a death in our family or among people close to us, we realize how fragile and hopeless a man's life is and we are led to seek answers from God about life after death. When our children become rebellious and there is nothing we can do to instruct them, we come to seek God's intervention.

The best way to help yourself and others who are in a crisis, is to let yourself and others depend only on God. When people around you get discouraged, or panic in a crisis, encourage them to seek the Lord who always provides a way to overcome crisis.

### **By obeying God's word through what we have**

The key to overcoming a crisis is to obey God's word. Obey what word? We have to obey, #1 His word to moving on, and, #2 His word to doing whatever He tells us to do with what we have.

#### **#1. Obeying God's word to moving on.**

In facing a crisis, the Israelites were looking back to their past and they wished that they would have stayed in Egypt. The Israelites said that they would have rather stayed in Egypt and served the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness (verses 11-12). They wanted go back to Egypt where they would be slaves again.

But, going back to Egypt was not God's will for them. God's will for them was to move forward. In verse 15 the LORD said to Moses: *Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to **move on**.* "Move on!" What kind of command is this? With this command, God did not mean that they had to plunge into the sea to death. What did God mean by the command then? He meant that they should not go back. They should not look back. They should move forward with trust in God's deliverance. In that situation, turning back could not help them at all.

To overcome this crisis, they had to stick to God's guidance and move on.

Here, Egypt represents the Devil who attacks believers, and brings them down. And slavery in Egypt represents life under the enslaving power of sin. Once a person accepts Jesus into his or her heart, Satan will pursue that person to bring him or her back to his enslavement. He is always looking for an opportunity to bring God's children down into the sinful world again. That is why we believers should not choose to go back but move on.

Romans 6:16-18 says:

*Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness*

In Luke 9:59-62, when Jesus called some people to follow Him, a man requested Jesus to allow him to take care of his past first. The man said: *I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.* But Jesus replied to him: *No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*

The Australian coat of arms pictures two creatures--the emu, a flightless bird, and the kangaroo. The animals were chosen because they share a characteristic that appealed to the Australian citizens. Both the emu and kangaroo can move only forward, not back. The emu's three-toed foot causes it to fall if it tries to go backwards, and the kangaroo is prevented from moving in reverse by its large tail. Those who truly choose to follow Jesus become like the emu and kangaroo, moving only forward, never back.

The people of God had come to a place where they had to make a "choice." One choice is to give up and go back to slavery in Egypt, a

place of defeat. The other choice is to trust and obey God and to move on to gain victory and freedom. Make the choice to move on. Never look back. Never go back to your old life. Keep trusting in the Lord's deliverance and move forward.

**#2. Obeying God's word is doing what we can do with what we have**

When God helped the Israelites to overcome their crisis, God did not tell them to build ships. God did not tell them to swim across the sea. God told Moses just to raise his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. It was not impossible for Moses to raise the staff in his hand. It was not impossible for him to stretch out his hand over the sea. When Moses stretched out his staff over the sea, God divided the sea and let them walk across. God performed a miracle through what Moses did with the staff in his hand.

We can't perform miracles. A miracle is something supernatural that only God can perform. But we can be used by God for miracles. How? By obeying whatever God tells us to do with what we have. When God performs a miracle in our lives, He uses what we have.

In John ch.2 when Jesus performed a miracle by turning water into wine, He used what the people had there- the water jars, the ordinary water. When the servants obeyed what the Lord told them to do with these ordinary things they had, the water was turned into wine. When Jesus performed the miracle to feed five thousand people in a remote place, He used what they had there- five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). When they brought Him the five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus turned them into abundant food for five thousand people. When Jesus performed the miracle of healing a blind man in John ch.9, He used mud on the ground with His saliva to put on the blind man's eyes. Then He told the blind man to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash his eyes there. When the man did just as Jesus told him to do, his blind eyes were healed and he could see.

When you need God's miraculous help, do not look for what you do not have. Try to use what you have in your hand now. God never tells you

to do something impossible. God wants you to do something you can do with what you have now. God says in Deuteronomy 30:11-14  
*<sup>11</sup> Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. <sup>12</sup> It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>13</sup> Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.*

Are you facing a hopeless crisis today? Trust in God and stand firm. Be still. Listen to what God is saying to you. Obey Him with what you have. What God has placed in your hand now may be just something ordinary. But when you obey God's word with it, He may turn the ordinary into something extraordinary. And the Lord will surely bring a miracle to you and let you overcome crisis.

### **By giving glory to God**

It was God who led them to the place of crisis. He could have easily led them around the sea. He could have led the people another way. He could have taken them straight from Egypt to the Promised Land. He could have destroyed Pharaoh back in Egypt. However, He did not do so. He led them toward the Red Sea. He allowed Pharaoh to pursue them.

Why did God lead them into such a difficult situation? As we have seen above, the first reason was to teach them to depend upon no one but God. But the more important reason was to reveal His glory. When God told them to move on, He clearly stated this point: *"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. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen"* (verses 17-18).

When the Israelites were positioned between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea, it was impossible for them to rescue themselves. They had

neither weapons to fight against the Egyptian army nor ships to cross over the sea. They had no way to escape. But God divided the sea, so that they could cross the sea without ships. God let the Egyptian army perish in the sea. Who could perform such a miracle to overcome this crisis? Nobody but God! So, when such a miracle happened all the people including Egyptians themselves, recognized that the God of Israel was the living God. Through the miraculous deliverance, God revealed His glory not only among believers but also among unbelievers.

God's purpose in a crisis in our lives is to let us and let people around us see His glory and give glory to Him. God can turn your crisis into an opportunity to perform a miracle for you. By doing so, God wants you and others around you to give glory to Him.

When you have a crisis in your life, seek God's glory, seek a way to give glory to Him. Even if you can't understand why God allows you to face a crisis, just give glory to Him in the crisis. And God will let you overcome the crisis through His miraculous power.

That is what Job did in his trials. When suddenly tragedy hit his life, he did not understand why God had allowed this to happen to him. But he gave glory to God (Job 1:20-22).

When you face a crisis, always remember what the Lord promises in Psalm 50:15 *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me* (New King James Version).

Whatever an "Egyptian army" situation or a "Red Sea" situation you may face today there is deliverance if you seek God's glory. Give Him glory today in all your circumstances.