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Sermon preached by our Pastor

on Thursday Evening

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Lesson. Exodus 14. vv. 5-31.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Exodus 14. 13.

At first sight and undoubtedly to Israel when they came into these extreme circumstances, there must have been a very large element of mystery filling their minds and spirits. I will postulate from two angles. One, God had just now, after a long period of years delivered them from Egypt: was this the next step to deliverance? How does it harmonise with the word; "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them."? (Exod.4) How could the circumstances obtaining as in the chapter harmonise with the amazing deliverance out of bondage? They were not wandering, nor diverted into a false course. They had not missed or lost their way or stepped wrongly. They had just with rejoicing and expectation followed the glory of God going before them. It was therefore the path of God's own leading.

Take these two propositions: they had been remarkably delivered. God had spoken beautiful words concerning them, and they had acted with an obediential spirit and gone forth with the greatest expectations. There was nothing hazy about their way. They had the glory of God to follow, yet coming into extreme circumstances it looked as though this would be the end, - the annihilation of the Jews. I have been, and I can say it to you, in a degree of agony of spirit to come to you tonight because I knew how you felt and I wanted a message from God. Nothing came until this. You may well be personally, in your family, in a community in the same type of experience. So I shall endeavour to fence the word and to

take up the vital word given by God to Moses to speak to the people.

The only thing I want to say further as an introduction is, you may wonder why God ever allowed things to get to such a pass; why He ever allowed His people to come into such extremities. For instance, take the case in the New Testament of the two loving sisters, very different in temperament, - the trio loved by the Lord; Martha, Mary; Mary, Martha, and the illness of Lazarus, and the sending to Jesus with the expectation of a prompt response. We know this from what the sisters said; "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." - Why was it Thou didst not come at once, or speak a word?" There was the little home He loved and where they often entertained Him, and when they came into trouble and sent to Him they thought He would respond immediately. He did not. Is it not the same with us? Sometimes the Lord does respond quickly; He gives you an answer quickly. You are not delivered out of your troubles but He has given you a word of promise and hope. Notice this: the Lord sees fit, I believe, in most cases, for us to pass through things. Some things are averted. There are occasions when you greatly fear and the mountains flow down at His presence. A mountain built up in front of me yesterday and it flowed down. All I feared evaporated eventually. With the anxieties, trials, calamities and distresses of the Lord's people it is His purpose that we pass through. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." (Isa. 43.2) and passing through is over a long period, perhaps for some years. There are those things so acute, painful and heart-rending and the Lord brings His people quick relief. You may say; "Why is it we come into such extremities?" Those dear Israelites were pursued and overtaken by the Egyptians and there was no visible way of deliverance. They could not see any sign of deliverance. Why? Why have we been brought so very low in various trials and distresses? What is the answer?

First, dear friends, it is not our province to ask why. What is the issue, and what may be proposed here? I propose what the Lord Himself declared. What did He? He said to His disciples concerning the case of Lazarus; "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep...I am glad for sakes that I was not there." Why? "to the intent ~~that~~ ye may believe." That is the key to it all. Are you able to follow?

His purpose was that the spirit of Lazarus should enter into the veil and his body be in the tomb. Why? So He should be able to demonstrate in a greater degree than ever His own glory as the sovereign Lord of life and death, and that He is the Resurrection and the life. That is the answer. We are ^{proceeding} into extremities so that the Lord may display His glory. That was the purpose of God in this episode in the history of the Israelites, - so He should show His own glorious power. It is so with you who fear Him and you will prove it. He works so that He has all the glory. I will pass to the word before us.

Really there is a striking word in the context. I will tell you what I mean. The context is repining, The poor Jews began to repine, and they said; "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" and so on, and they ended by saying; "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." They looked back to Egypt, That is to say they were repining. May I refer to a personal note? I shall never forget the first and only time I preached in the old Chapel that was destroyed, Salem, Portsmouth. On the Saturday the Germans raided Portsmouth, and that meant sleeping in an air raid shelter. I set off in the morning and entered the Chapel with Mr Hitchens. There were a few faithful souls and we began the Prayer Meeting before the morning service with

"Let me not murmur nor repine,
Under these trying strokes of Thine
But while I walk the mournful road
Be still and know that Thou art God." (275)

The dear old saint announced this beautiful hymn and the bombardment began and we had to go back to the shelter. The Lord brought us through the day. It was a day marked in my soul and in heaven. What a spirit to be in! I believe the little company were all in a sweet spirit, and I believe there was a blessed spirit of submission and peace and justification of the Lord in all His ~~things~~ dealings. There was a feeling of loving, fatherly care, a blessed preparation to live and to die. The Lord grant us the same spirit now.

There is something here that is amazing. These Jews repined. "It had

been better for us to serve the Egyptians." The heart is base, is it not? How did the Lord reply? You would think He would have been silent or sent a word of rebuke. It is amazing to me. He said; "fear ye not, stand still. I will tell you at once how it opened to my mind. It proves that we stand on His merit. Your salvation, deliverance, blessing, all result from His merit.

"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

So the Lord will deal with His people according to His merit. The Father deals with you according to what Christ has done in your behalf. The only answer is, He looked on them, and a word in the hymn is a word that is relevant to this;

"Rebellious thou hast been,
And art rebellious still;
But since in love I took thee in,
My promise I'll fulfil." (1032)

That did it.

"His pity melted o'er our woes,
And saved the trembling, dying prey." (1080)

I should give a postscript to this. We have known the same personally. I have gone to preach when I have felt such a sinner and have been guilty. A word has distressed my mind and I have thought, yes, I shall be in bondage; my mouth will be shut and the Lord will let me come to confusion. Instead on some occasions I have had a melting and a blessed time in my soul and I have put the crown on His adorable head. Is it the same with you in hearing? You have felt to be such a rebellious wretch; such a flood of corruption in you, and you felt the Lord would smite you, and you have gone fearing and trembling, and He has brought you to His dear feet and broken your heart with His love. He has driven away your fear and you have crowned Him. He never leaves any to excuse themselves. It is because you stand on His merit before God.

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Is it not obvious that their deliverance spelt out something far greater to

posterity and to His spiritual Israel, the Church of God, greater than the historic deliverance of Israel from Egypt? It obviously it does. So it appears to me, I feel in my soul the Lord has brought me to this scene for a purpose. It is significant as you look at the sea and think of the waves of swelling grief over the bosom of Christ as our Surety. We may think of the explicit direction to Moses to stretch out his rod, and think of Mr Hart's concise language;

"Came at length the dreadful night,
Vengeance, with its iron rod,
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God." (802)

so a passage should be made for you, a way of salvation. As I read the words; "The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind" I think of my Saviour in His Passion. It points that way to me, so I suggest that to your minds.

I feel we may well say something further as to the issue. They were brought to the other shore, and so you will be. The Lord said, and He fulfilled it; "And Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." My friends, is it not your hope and expectation that you will see the Egyptians dead on the sea shore? When you are safely landed you will know that sin, death and hell, all your enemies are dead. David uses strong language when he speaks of his enemies and he wishes terrible things for them. "Let them go down quick into hell." (Psa. 55.15) I only read it in relation to the enemies of his soul, not to the persons of men; to sin, death and hell. Christ said; "Love your enemies." You could not say before God concerning your fellow mortals; "Let them go down quick into hell, and let their wives be widows and their children be fatherless." I read all this in relation to the mortal enemies of the soul; Satan, sin, the world, death and hell, and a body of sin and death; you would see them dead on the sea shore. The Lord will give you a glorious, spiritual, powerful body in the resurrection to be reunited to your ransomed soul.

What is the language to the people? "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." The first word, "Fear not," is really an

extension of Tuesday. I want to show you how the Lord removes terrible agony, paralysing fear that is servile and craven. It is not only a fear that belongs to a slave; it is cowardice. He says; "Fear ye not." To a child of God there are two things to be named relative to fear. One is, we are brought to recognise there is a God-dishonouring fear, a slavish fear. After all the Lord has wrought for and in us, and after all His mercy and goodness and faithfulness and lovingkindness that changes not it is not honouring to the Lord to entertain servile fear. It contradicts His gracious word.

"Brought safely by His hand thus far,
Why dost thou now give place to fear?" (961)

Why? It is dishonouring to the Lord.

There is another word. It is amazing how compassionate the Lord is to fearful people. He looks on them in their fear and distress and He is pleased to give precious remedies to dissipate their fear. How then does He remove these fears? There are several ways. Dr Watts has a wonderful word;

"A word of Thy supporting breath
Drives all my fears away." (139)

We have proved it. He speaks to your soul; it is His supporting breath. It is heavenly breath divine that fills your spirit and drives all your fear away. It is His love. When it flows into your soul immediately your fears are completely removed. There is no room for fear when the love of God fills the soul. Some of you remember it on a hospital bed; in a time of affliction, trouble, danger, loneliness. You are affrighted, and the Lord speaks a word of His supporting breath to your soul, your fears are removed. His sweet presence will remove your fears; He stands by you. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14.27) You can not make one anxiety. This is to know His forgiving love in your soul. Hezekiah was so fearful because he had not received pardon. That was the great point, to know his sins were behind the Lord's back. He uses the ministry to that end. He speaks to you immediately and your fears are removed. "Fear ye not." If the Lord speaks a word to us we never lose it. It will remain with you all your days and the Lord keeps

renewing it: it is yours. He has written it on fleshy tables. How wonderful! and you will prove it. "Fear ye not." It is wonderful how there is a communication from the Lord and there is no fear left. Some of you will remember dear old Mr Burfoot from "Hope". When he was in the terrible fighting in France and he feared he would be killed, he said the Lord dropped a word into his heart;

"What would my blood avail, if spilt?
Thou hast in richer blood been paid." (873)

He never after feared he would be killed because the Lord had given him that. God's word in his soul brought him through. Have you got something from the Lord? (I am not suggesting one will remain in the enjoyment of it.)

"Stand still." You say; "Would that be easy?" When the Lord says it: it is impossible to do it apart from grace. How could they stand still as men? It is impossible. His grace enabled His people to stand. You only stand on His merit to stand still; only on Christ the solid Rock. You can stand on Him in the promise, in His character, as to what He has proved to you of His fatherly love and care and His relationship to you,- Father, Husband, Friend.

"Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." This is a good word. Salvation is synonymous with deliverance, but it points to the work of redemption Christ accomplished in His Passion. It is the blessed principle and the fountain source of all deliverance. "See the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to day." I will give you an exercise. If you are receptive, go home and try to plunder and recount as to how many deliverances you have known in your time,- outstanding deliverances. Go back over the way, as the Lord helps you: how many times has He favoured you to enter into the text? If you remember one with the witness of the Spirit in your soul, you know what the path and the issue will be. "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." (2 Cor.1.10) Amen.