

The Power of God

Exodus

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Bible Text: Exodus 14:13-31
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Before we read the text this morning for the message, maybe you heard this story. It's during the Christmas shopping season, there was a lady who lived in Washington state, she went to Walmart to purchase a small kitchen appliance, it's called an instant pot, and she wanted to, you know, take a look at it and so she opened the box up, was investigating the piece and unbeknownst to her, she lost her wedding ring inside the box. It was a really beautiful wedding ring, quite expensive. Anyway, she didn't know that she had lost it and she closed the box back up and she did not buy the item and it appears that a few days later someone came along and bought the item and when they got home, they opened the box up and they, obviously they found the wedding ring, and thanks to Facebook this lady was able to reunite the wedding ring with its owner. And you might have heard the story and they called it a, what? Do you know what they called it? They called it a Christmas miracle. Now I don't know what would have happened if this had happened July the 4th, I don't know, but July 4th miracle, yeah.

I don't know about you but in all honesty that really seems like a serious lowering of the bar for miracles, you know. I understand how a person could be really happy that the ring was reunited but I think that's kind of a lowering of the bar of miracles and so this morning what I'd like for us to do is read our text and let the text raise the bar back up where it needs to be for the miracle. So in the book of Exodus 14, would you take your Bible and turn to Exodus 14 and as we read this, maybe in the back of your mind you might be wondering this, whether miracles like this happen today, because what we're about to read is quite amazing, and as we read it, it's okay to wonder do miracles like this happen today.

Exodus 14, beginning at verse 13 and I'm gonna read through the end of that chapter, the end of verse 31. So stay with me. Exodus 14, beginning at verse 13.

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. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." 15 The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. 16 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. 17 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 host, his chariots, and his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen." 19 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, 20 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. 21 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. 22 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. 23 The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. 24 And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, 25 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." 26 Then 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." 27 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. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. 29 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. 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

This is God's word.

Let me pray.

Our gracious God, we are people who forget so easily. We forget and we fail to behold, to behold how great a salvation that you have wrought, and so we ask that by your Spirit this morning you will stir us, remind us that it was with the immeasurable great power of the Lord toward us that enabled us to believe. Open our eyes that we, like the Israelites, may behold the great power of our Lord. In his name we pray. Amen.

We have come to the climactic event of the exodus story. It's an event that still to this day echoes throughout history. After 400 years, after over 400 years of slavery, the Israelites have been set free. They have left Egypt and they're on their way to the Promised Land. Pharaoh has let God's people go but he's changed his mind. He's changed his mind and like a drunk waking up out of a stupor has said, "What have I done? What have we done letting the Israelites go from serving us?" So Pharaoh assembled his army. He employs his elite military equipment of his day which would have been those special chariots, and with Pharaoh and his army pursuing the Israelites, they find themselves between an unconquerable army and an impassable sea.

The last time that we looked at this story which was a couple of weeks ago, we left off with God leading his people. You remember they left Egypt and God was leading them with a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day, and it was clear that God was leading his people, and now we find that God has led them to camp by the Red Sea, and from the standpoint of military strategy, it was a terrible position. I mean, if you look at this closely it leaves you scratching your head wondering if God is leading his people, why did he lead them here? They were at a terrible disadvantage, so why? Perhaps it's this, if you're trying to teach people that it is impossible for them to save themselves and that only God is able to save, then this is a perfect position to be in because that's exactly where they were, they were in an impossible situation, they could not save themselves and perhaps God led them there to show them that very thing, that what was impossible for them was possible with him. Perhaps the only way that we can even begin to understand just how significant this story is, is to see how God viewed it. You see, I admit, you know, I read this story and though it is amazing, I mean if you're paying attention, you know, if you're paying attention you think about, "Okay, these folks are up against the Red Sea. The Egyptian army is chasing them. I mean, they're in an impossible situation. If they can't get out of this, the Egyptians are gonna bring them back into slavery." And then you think, "You know, how are they gonna get across this sea? It's impossible. It's gonna require a miracle." And a miracle takes place. God opens up the sea but just to say that alone is just unfathomable that God could open up the Red Sea and that they would walk across not on wet ground, dry ground, and that the sea be like a wall on one side and a wall on the other. I mean, it's easy to forget and just to lose sight of how great this is.

So maybe, maybe this is why that throughout the Israelites' history God draws their attention back to this event again and again. God will not let this go. In other words, he doesn't just do it and say, "Oh, just don't talk about it anymore." No, over and over and over again throughout Israel's history God brings this event up again and again. You may not have noticed it but let me just show you just a few places, just a few beginning in Psalm 78. The Psalmist writes, "He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap." Verse 53, "He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." Now just stop there. You think Psalms are songs of praise where God's people will be encouraged to lift up their eyes above all the problems of this life and to praise God, to give him the praise that he deserves, and so in writing this Psalm God's people are reminded again of what God did,

he divided the sea so that they could walk across safely, and their enemies were wiped out and overwhelmed.

Then Psalm 106, "He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and he led them through the deep as through a desert. So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left." Again, reminding God's people. We forget. Reminding God's people of God's great power, his saving work.

Psalm 136, "to him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever; and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever; but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his steadfast love endures forever." It's as if God was saying, "If you begin to doubt my love, if you begin to doubt my pledge, my loyalty to you, just remember what I did for you at the Red Sea."

Isaiah 50, "Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea." God is saying, "Look, do you think, do you think that I run up against a situation I can't handle? Do you think I'm not able to deliver you in your time of distress? By my mere rebuke I dried up the sea."

Isaiah 51:10, "Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?"

This is just a few samples throughout Israel's history God brings them back to this event. It's God saying, listen it's God saying, "You were facing an impossible situation and I saved you. You were facing an impossible situation and I saved you. Don't ever forget this." And because God knows we are forgetful, he reminds us again and again, he brings us back to his steadfast love, his great power. You might say, "How in the world, how in the world could you ever forget this?" It's a great miracle, but we do, don't we? We forget. I mean, we know these stories, we know the stories but we forget in the sense that they land upon us in a way that causes us to give God the praise that he deserves.

We forget, but then for some, for some it's another issue altogether. For some it's this, how could you ever believe an event like this happened in the first place? Now look, I don't want to gloss over this, I don't want us to just say, "Hey, here's what happened and you're onboard with this, right?" It's a big event, the parting of the Red Sea. Someone might say, "Do you all here really believe that happened?" Now I know, I know nobody's gonna stand up and say, "I just don't believe this." It's probably unlikely. But in the back of our minds we may think, "You know, gee, did this really happen? I mean, did this really happen or is it just a good story, well-crafted, exciting but surely this didn't happen."

You see, if a person is predisposed to not believe in miracles, then it's likely that no argument is going to be sufficient. I've certainly learned this over the years, that there are some people that are predisposed, they are anti-miracle and no matter what you say and no matter how you try to explain, they do not believe and you know what I would say to a

person like that and I say this because you're going to run up against people like this, you already have and you will continue to do so, you should challenge, challenge them to consider where this position leads. I mean, it's okay if they want to be anti-miracle, they can be but you need to drill down and begin to ask them and help them to see where this position leads to because if they're anti-miracle, they're gonna lose this, you see, the salvation of the Lord is a miracle. The salvation of the Lord is a miracle and if you're anti-miracle, that's gonna leave you in a bad place. It's gonna leave you in an impossible situation. But you might say, "But I'm not sure that this really happened." So let me help you for just a moment. Here's how I was helped, let me help you. Do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead? Now think about it, if you believe that, that is a far greater miracle than this. God raising Jesus from the dead is a far greater miracle than what we're reading about here in Exodus 14.

So think about it, if you say, "Yes, I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead but I just know about these other miracles, you know, the Red Sea, Jonah being swallowed by a whale." Look, look, you're not thinking. You're not thinking. If you can be brought to a place where you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, that is a far far greater miracle than the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. On the other hand, if you don't believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, you have bigger problems, believe me, you have bigger problems than whether God parted the Red Sea or not.

But look, the parting of the Red Sea was quite a display of God's power and that brings us to this and I want to mention two things today, two things as we look at this account. First, where is God's power today? You know, I feel like we're being a little slippery if we read this, if we read this account and then not talk about the obvious. Someone will look at this and might say, "Okay, okay, great. Where is God's power today? That was a long time ago, preacher. A long time ago when this took place. Great story but long time ago. Are there any Red Sea type miracles today?" Two things I want to say to that today. The first is this: if you have believed and obeyed the Gospel, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, if you have repented and turned from your old way of life to follow Jesus Christ, if your trust is in Christ completely, if that's the case for you, what God has done for you is every bit as powerful as the Red Sea miracle. I want to spend a few minutes just to drill down on that. If you have been born again, if you belong to Jesus, then what God has done for you and in you is every bit as powerful as the miracle that God did at the Red Sea.

Let me spend a few minutes there, alright? Romans 1:16 is a key verse for this, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Why is that important? At the end of chapter 14 we read, "Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians," and you might say, "Well, where is God's great power today? Where is the Red Sea miracles today?" "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation." In every generation, the Gospel, the good news of what Jesus has done to save us is the power of God. Where is the power of God today? Just as the Israelites faced their impossibility, we all faced the impossibility of saving ourselves and, oh, how we forget this and we forget it at the peril of two things, we forget, we forget how lost we were and therefore if we forget that and forget God's

great power to save us, it diminishes our praise of God, our joy in God; and secondly, it diminishes our evangelistic fervor. If we forget the condition that lost sinners are in and that they are in an impossible situation, our evangelistic fervor, our evangelistic witness will be extremely diminished.

The disciples understood this. Remember there was a rich young ruler who came to Jesus and wanted to know how he could have eternal life and Jesus said, "Well, here's what you're gonna need to do. There's this one thing you lack yet," and that one thing that he lacked was Jesus. The young man walked away sorrowfully, and remember Jesus said, "You know, it's far easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," and the disciples were aghast, they were, "Well, who then can be saved?" Remember what Jesus said, "With man it's impossible but with God all things are possible."

You see, we forget, we as Karl Menninger once said, we fish who are off the hook, we have forgotten what it's like to be on the hook. It kind of reminds you this morning what it was like to be on the hook from Romans 3, Paul said, "None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one." Those words, if you want to use imagery for those words, those words are like the Israelites standing in an impossible situation. Our real condition before Christ was none is righteous. What does that mean? It means no one, no one was able to meet God's perfect demands. No one.

But then the phrase "no one seeks for God." I want to kick against that one a little bit. Surely that can't be true. Surely that can't be true. Surely there's people who are religious and spiritual, surely they're looking for God, they're just trying to find God in their own innocent honest way. No, what God is saying here is no one – listen – no one prompted by their own decision and acting in their own ability ever wants to find the true God. Let's put it this way, no one gets up out of bed and says, "I want to find God today so I can worship him and enjoy him above everything else." No one does that. Outside of the intervention of God, no one gets up and goes looking for God to put him first and to worship him above all things. That's what Paul means. No one seeks for God. Oh, we, let's be clear, we might seek his blessings or we might seek his stuff, but that's a far cry from yielding control of our lives to him, to worship him and enjoy him forever.

Then it says we all have turned aside and that is to say that we willfully wandered away from our Creator, meaning that left to ourselves this is our true condition, we are on the hook, we're on the hook and until God's Spirit changes our minds and our hearts, we will never come to Christ. That was our condition and unless God does something, unless God intervenes, unless he moves into an impossible situation for us, we will perish.

So how does he do this? How does he do this? Let's walk through a few Scriptures together. In Romans 10, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." For us to come to a place where we will put our trust in the Lord, for us to come to a place where we will leave our own self-salvation project and to put our faith and trust in Christ alone, we must hear something, we must hear the Gospel message. We must

hear what God has done for us through Christ. Faith comes by hearing, hearing through the word of Christ.

Here's the way James put it. James says of his own will, of God's own will he brought us forth. That phrase "brought us forth" means he birthed us. He gave us new birth by what? By the word of truth, the Gospel message. I'm not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of God. He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

2 Corinthians 5, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Friends, that is miracle language. That does not happen aside from the power of God.

Are there miracles today? Philippians 1:6. I love this one, "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." You see, that verse not only tells me the beginning of the power of God but the continuing miracle of the power of God. He will bring it to completion. He's going to carry this work along the way. He's gonna hold us fast and bring us safely home.

Oh, there's many more. There's many more pictures. There's the crossing from death to life, a certain way that the Scriptures draws out this outstanding miracle of salvation, bringing a person from death to life or another way, opening our eyes. I mean, all these times we see Jesus opening blinded eyes, it's pointing to something even greater, it's opening our spiritually blinded eyes that we might behold the glory of the Lord. I mean, think about it, let's get a little more personal here. You're here today and you come to Christ and you are experiencing new God-given desires. Some of you are reading the Bible, a book that you neglected for years. Some of you want to read the Bible. You're like a baby, it's like milk to you, but years before you didn't want to. Some of you here today, you've made a habit of coming and assembling together with God's people.

I was talking with a brother this week and I won't mention any names, but he doesn't realize just how much it thrilled me for him to say this, he said he can remember the time, he can remember the time when he partied so hard that come Sunday morning when the paper was being delivered he was still drinking and smoking weed. If I was to tell you who it was, you'd be shocked. But God got ahold of him and he's a new man in Christ.

There's some of you here today, you were a drunk. You didn't want to admit it, you didn't want to admit it, you didn't ever want to say that about yourself but you were a drunk and God rescued you. There's some today no doubt had problems with substance abuse. There are people here who their desires were off the charts in a bad way and they're here today and they've made a habit of, "I want to come and I want to worship with God's people. I want to grow in grace. I want to grow in my knowledge of God."

Friend, you do know, right, those are Spirit-given desires. The Holy Spirit living in you creating these new desires that you never had before. I have desires, I have desires I know they didn't come from me. I never wanted, I never desired these things but now, now I do.

Why? Because God, God has wrought a work in me. What God has done for those who believe is every bit as powerful as the Red Sea miracle. I want you to know that today because there will be people who will say, "Where are his miracles today? Where is his power today?" Right here. Right here. Right here, sir. Right here, ma'am.

Then there's one other thing, the Red Sea miracle is actually pointing to the miracle of God's greater salvation in Jesus. How do we know that? 1 Corinthians 10, Paul's commentary on Exodus 14. "I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud." Now let me just pause there for just one moment and say something about one word, "our fathers." We live in an extremely individualistic society. I was reading an interview of the actor Michael Caine yesterday. They asked him, they said what are the rules that you live by? You know, the foundational rules that you live by and he said, "I believe in God but I don't ever go to church." It was like that was his rules for life, you know, like, "I believe in God but I don't want nothing to do with church." I thought, you know, there it is. There it is right there. There is this Americanized individualistic skewing of Christianity that says, "Yup, I can be spiritual, I can believe in God, I can believe all this stuff. Yeah, I believe all the stuff you're reading but I don't want nothing to do with church."

Listen, "I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers." When Paul was writing to the believers in the first century he wanted them to understand that they were connected, God's people are a family. Not little people running here and running there, they are a family, that they could be spoken of that our fathers, those redeemed before us. "I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." What is Paul saying? He's saying for the Israelites passing through the Red Sea was a type of baptism and it was a forecast of our deliverance in Christ. In other words, Paul is wanting the church to see that this Red Sea miracle was not just God tripping out one day saying, "Hey, let's do something here, you know?" No, it's all pointing toward something. It was saying that once we were enslaved in the Egypt of sin but now Christ has set us free. We have been baptized into Christ. We are in union with the Son of God. All of this symbolized at the Red Sea. What God was doing there certainly was pointing to what God would do in and through his Son Jesus Christ.

So let me end with a question. Jesus said these words and I want you to listen very closely to the imagery that he uses here. "Truly, truly I say to you whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed or crossed from death unto life." Isn't it interesting that Jesus would use that Red Sea language of passing through or crossing over from death unto life. What he's saying is for all of you who are facing an impossible situation of saving yourself, believing, putting your trust in Jesus Christ will be the great miracle of crossing over from spiritual death into eternal life. Have you made that crossing? Have you made that crossing yet?

So do miracles happen today? Yes, you're likely sitting beside one.