

Exodus 14-15

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[0 : 00] Please take a seat. This evening is the second in our series. I'm not a Christian because we had a cracking start last week.

Great time of fellowship together and looking at why all religions aren't the same. Tonight we've got I'm not a Christian because you can't trust the Bible. An absolutely world class speaker called Bob Aykroyd, the principal of Edinburgh Theological Seminary, what used to be the Free Church College, is coming to speak.

So whatever it takes, whatever the cost, whatever needs to be sold or given up, make sure you get yourself there because it will be well worth it.

And the coffee's not bad either. Let's pray and then we'll get to work.

Father God, thank you so much for this morning. Thank you for all the truths that we've sung. Thank you that we've been able to seek your face in prayer. Father, thank you that that's all possible because of Jesus.

[1 : 05] And so, Lord, we pray now as we come to study this written word. Father, would you show us ever more clearly your son, your living word. Father, bless us and help us in his glorious name.

Amen. We love escape stories. We love stories about escape. We love this idea of incarceration to freedom.

Although I dare say that goldfish is going to find it's not actually greener on the other side. We love bondage to redemption. We love prison bars exchanged for open spaces.

Escape stories really resonate with us. We like them. We have films like Papillon with Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman trying to escape from prison.

We have stories like 12 Years a Slave, that box office hit of last year. We have Amazing Grace, William Wilberforce and William Pitt trying to end the slave trade.

[2 : 09] That classic, the wooden horse where the inmates take up gymnastics in order that they can tunnel out of the prison. We have that world famous Shawshank Redemption.

We have Les Mis as Jean Valjean tries to escape the clutches of Inspector Javert. Escape stories seem to resonate with us.

We like the idea of escaping. We have TV series like Prison Break and Breakout Kings. Harry Houdini captured imaginations with his escapology.

Children play games like Stuck in the Mud, where people are stuck and then they're freed. We have fairy tales like Hansel and Gretel and Sleeping Beauty.

Even Aladdin's classic is about Princess Jasmine trying to escape the life of luxury she has in the palace, whilst at the same time Aladdin trying to escape the clutches of poverty that he has.

[3 : 15] The theme of escape resonates with us, but there's no more famous escape story than the aptly named The Great Escape. If we were feeling more joyous we could perhaps sing the theme tune, but I'll save it.

But the film is based on the true story of 76 prisoners of war who set about escaping from the Stalag Luft III prisoner of war camp in Lower Silesia in modern day Poland by tunneling.

They built three tunnels. One of them was viable. They left. 76 got out. But what we learn in the story is getting out is only half the story.

Getting out is only half the story. There is a massive difference between getting out and getting to safety. Of the 76 who escaped, 50 were shot dead.

23 were recaptured and severely punished. Only three made it to safety. There is a massive difference between getting out and getting to safety.

[4 : 26] Good old Alcatraz. For its 29 years as a state penitentiary in America in San Francisco Bay, 36 prisoners tried to escape.

Six were shot dead. Seven drowned. 23 recaptured. There is a massive difference between getting out and getting to safety.

And as we turn to Exodus 14, this is what hangs in the balance. The Israelites have gotten out. In chapter 12, verse 31, Pharaoh lets the people go.

But they're not safe. They're not safe yet. It's impossible to exaggerate just how key the crossing of the Red Sea is to the rest of the Bible.

There are 24 explicit references to it in the rest of the Old Testament. Countless in the New Testament. Most famous, Luke chapter 9, verse 31.

[5 : 33] They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. The word for departure is the word Exodus.

So as Moses and Elijah chat to Jesus on top of the mountain, they very much see it as a second better Exodus. Hebrews 11, by faith, the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land.

But when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. Probably most famous and awkwardly, 1 Corinthians 10. For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And a little bit later down it says, Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction.

This crossing of the Red Sea isn't just a historical fact. It's important for us. What we're looking at this morning is about the Hebrews not just getting out, but getting to safety.

[6 : 50] But it's written for us. It helps us get out of our bondage and get us to our safety, which is the Lord Jesus. So if you've got a Bible, it will be massively helpful.

If you could turn to Exodus chapter 14. And I want to start reading at verse 5.

Exodus chapter 14 and verse 5. When the king of Egypt was told that the people have fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their mind about them and said, What have we done?

We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services. So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took 600 of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them.

The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites who were marching out boldly. 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-ha-hiroth, opposite Baal-zaphon.

[8 : 05] As Pharaoh approached the Israelites, looked up, and there were the Egyptians marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. 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? 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.

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 will never, you will never see again.

The Lord will fight for you. You need only be still. Then the Lord said to Moses, Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the waters so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and haul his army through the chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.

[9 : 17] 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, so neither went near the other all night. 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. The Egyptians pursued them and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea.

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. He jammed the wheels of their chariots 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. Then the Lord said to Moses, stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.

[10 : 29] Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and at daybreak, the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing towards 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. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on their right and a wall of water on their left.

That day, the Lord saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses, his servant.

They'd taken a kind of roundabout route to get to Pi-Hahiroth. You saw that last week that they didn't take the most obvious route so that they would perhaps evade the Egyptians should they come after them.

But back in Egypt, the Pharaoh is freaking out. You can just imagine he's woken up in the morning and he had to get his own slippers because there were no slaves in the house. He had to spread his own marmalade on his sourdough toast.

[11 : 46] He had to retrieve the paper himself and open his own post and he thinks, what have we done? I love verse 5. It's so English. We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services.

He really means that we don't have any slaves anymore. So what does he do? He throws the kitchen sink in this retrieval protocol.

This idea of 600 best chariots is the phrase for his imperial guards. He calls the boys and says, right, we're going after them. His best chariots, his very own soldiers.

And just for good measure, he sends everybody else as well. It's like Barack Obama sending the Navy SEALs and the rest of the US Army. And they overtook them and they blocked them in.

This is what it looks like. The Hebrews have been moving left to right. The Egyptians have overtaken them. They're penned in by the sea and if they go back, it's towards Egypt. They are trapped.

[12 : 46] It's like, it's going to be like shooting fish in a barrel. What we have on our hands is a potential massacre. The Egyptians are a fierce, fighting superpower.

And the Israelites perhaps have a pitchfork between all of them. And I want us to see three things this morning. Here's the first.

Salvation is freedom from bondage. Salvation is freedom from bondage. If you just flick back to chapter 13, verse 18, it says, the Israelites went out of Egypt ready for battle.

You can imagine them. They've got camo paint, back slaps. They're like, we're going for this. And they give a good grunt, like, ha! Look at chapter 14, verse 8.

The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites who were marching out boldly. You can just imagine they're singing like one of those army songs, like, do, do, do, do, do, do, do, do.

[13 : 52] Do you know, as they march along, they look up for it. But look at chapter 14, verse 10. The Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians marching after them.

They were terrified and cried out to the Lord, utterly melted. It was all for show that when they saw their old slave masters in the distance, terrified.

And they start to moan. It seems like God's people have that kind of genetically embedded in them. Why didn't you leave us in Egypt, Moses? Were there not enough graves for us?

We really loved being slaves to the Egyptians. Why have you brought us out here to die? They've got terrible recollection. Like, horrendous recollection.

Back in chapter 4, this is what really happened. Then Moses and Aaron gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words of the Lord that were spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.

[14 : 58] And the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their reflection, they bowed their heads and worshipped him. Didn't read in that bit much like, actually, we're quite happy here.

I quite like making yasmin tea for the Pharaoh. Do you see, geographically, they're free. But spiritually, when their old slave masters are in the distance, they're back in bondage.

Let's go back. Let's go back to once we, once were. It's like this guy, Brooke Hanlon from Shawshank Redemption. He's been in prison for 50 years and finally, he gets a parole hearing and is set free from Shawshank Prison.

But though he's free geographically, inside, he's still a prisoner and he ends up committing suicide because he cannot cope. Just like the Israelites.

They got out but they didn't get to safety. Getting Israel out of Egypt is easy compared to getting Egypt out of the Israelites.

[16 : 09] You know the struggle in your own life. You know what it is to be free in Jesus and yet still to be bound by so many things. What about things like this?

On believing in Jesus, you're objectively free from trying to make yourself acceptable to God. You're objectively free. In Jesus, you can boldly approach God because of who Jesus is and yet subjectively, we all still think that it's about our performance.

That when we mess up, it's much more about running from God in fear than running to God for forgiveness. just like the Israelites.

Geographically out of bondage but spiritually still so enslaved. What about this? Sin. Still in bondage to sin.

All of us. That in Jesus we're no longer what we once were but are what we were one day be. The old has gone, the new has come. And yet still, doesn't the old man still creep up and show his face so often?

[17 : 22] So we were playing football on Friday night and Aaron, in all of his youthful enthusiasm, took a massive swipe at the ball. Fortunately, the ball had long since left and all that was in the way was my leg.

And I just, in that moment, just snapped. And it was the old man, the one who got really cross and angry and started shouting. And would have sought retaliation if I could have walked at the point.

Isn't it true? Free, but still. So often in bondage and then in idols. Idols that so readily creep up in our lives and say, serve me.

Serve us. The idol of Korea that you are, how high up the ladder you get. Money. That secretly we do all think that we're the exception to the rule.

And that we can serve both God and money and our bank account is actually what defines us. Our relationships and they all bow at the door and they say, serve me. That though we're free in Jesus forever, so often we're still in bondage.

[18 : 31] It's like our systematic theology. Past, when we believed in Jesus, we're justified, we're free from the penalty of sin. Present, being sanctified.

sanctified. We are being freed from the power of sin that it's losing its grip on us. And then in the future, glorification, we will be free from the very presence of sin.

The problem is that middle one is a story. The other two are kind of instantaneous, but this one is a story. God is working out his purposes to loosen the grip of idols and sin and still trying to do it by our works from us, so it's going to take time.

John 8, verse 36, so if the sun sets you free, you will be free indeed. Two weeks ago, I had three sets of people over for fajitas.

I can only really make fajitas, so if you're invited around, that's what we're having. If you're a vegetarian, bring something. And I made three sets of fajitas, and I have to say, every time I made them, they got a little better.

[19 : 46] And the reason they got a little better is because on Monday, I made a massive bowl of chicken, and I poured the marinade in, and it sat in my fridge. So on Monday, the chicken was slightly spicy.

On Tuesday, the chicken was a little bit more spicy, but by Thursday, man, beautiful. so much spice and juiciness and flavor because the marinade had penetrated right into the meat.

This is the thing. We're all still in bondage to many, many things. And how are we going to get ourselves free? We're going to marinate ourselves in the gospel.

We're going to remind ourselves every day that we are free in Jesus, that we don't need to worship what we once worshipped. We don't need to perform like once we used to think that we had to perform.

That we're going to let his salvation, his freedom, work its way into every part of our lives. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on the 1st of January, 1863.

[21 : 00] However, because the Civil War in the South still went on, and the Confederates still had control, if you were a slave in Texas, you weren't actually free until the 19th of June, 1865.

The two and a half years, your status was declared free. But it took two and a half years for the news to travel and for you to finally be free.

News travelled really slowly. But I have to say in our lives, news travels even slower. And therefore, we need to keep telling ourselves this good news. Jesus has set us free.

And he's set us free forever. Tell yourself you're free in Christ every day because we forget all the time. Salvation is freedom from bondage.

Second point, salvation is crossing over by grace. Salvation is crossing over by grace. Just look back at verse 13. Moses answered the people, do not be afraid, stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.

[22 : 08] The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You need only be still. You don't get a better representation of grace than that.

Stand over there, don't do anything, just watch and see that God will win for you. Seems like it's all grace. seems like they're going to get free not because of their efforts in fighting but because God is going to set them free.

And all night the wind blows, the waters part and they go by on dry ground with a wall on their left and a wall on their right. And this division is explicit.

Do you see how the Israelites have light in verse 20 but the Egyptians are still in darkness. they cross over by grace because God won the day.

Bondage to freedom. Instantaneous death to life. Darkness to light. Unadopted to adopted. Dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the sun.

[23 : 12] Old creature becomes new creature. Unregenerate becomes regenerate. Condemned becomes saved. The area of bondage becomes new. Freedom. It's a change of status.

salvation is crossing over by grace. So someone asks, are you a Christian? How would you answer, are you a Christian?

Perhaps you'll answer, I'm really trying. Some days more than others I'm working hard on it.

can I say if that's your answer, you haven't understood this at all. Because what we talk about in Christianity is crossing over by grace.

We believe in Jesus instantly, we're justified. It's binary, yes or no. It's not about effort. One point they were in the land of bondage, the next moment they're free as they cross over.

[24 : 17] It's crossing over by grace. There's no middle, there's no almost justified, there's no quasi-righteous, there's no diet Christian.

It's in or out. But I know what some people say, but you need faith, that's what I need to add. You need a good, strong faith. Well that's where I think this is so helpful.

Because all the Israelites cross over, and as they walk through on dry ground, there's a wall of water on their right and a wall of water on their left. And I dare say some people swagger across.

Isn't God great? He's won the day for us. Woo! But I bet there's some other people who are clinging to their friends going, we're going to die, we're going to die, we're going to die.

Do you see, it's not the quality of faith. It's the object of our faith. That God has won the day so that we don't have to.

[25 : 22] Do you know I had the awesome privilege before Christmas of hanging out with Ruby, before she went to be with the Lord, and she had absolute confidence of where she's going because she crossed over by grace.

Similarly with Ruth as I've seen her and so many of you have seen her, real confidence. She'll be with the Lord because she knows what it is to cross over by grace. She's not trusting in her performance but trusting that Jesus nailed her.

Salvation is crossing over by grace. It's what it is. Here's the last thing. Salvation is possible through only through a mediator.

Look at verse 11. they were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses and then they have this big moan.

Drop down to verse 15. Then the Lord said to Moses, why are you crying out to me? Moses hasn't been crying out. In fact, he's been the one who's been getting moaned at.

[26 : 32] And yet, do you see that Moses is so associated with his people that their sin becomes his sin? But then drop down to verse 21, that as Moses stretches out his hand, the Lord sets about parting the sea because Moses is so associated with God that his power works through Moses.

What a brilliant mediator, someone associated with the people and someone associated with God, so can be a perfect middle man. And yet, doesn't that point so much better to the Lord Jesus who's not associated with us but became like us in every way?

And someone who wasn't just associated with God but was God and dwelt amongst us to be the perfect mediator. God. And he wasn't just condemned for the sins of the people on one occasion like Moses, he was condemned for all our sins, carried out in all our lives and he took them upon himself.

Such a better mediator, fully man yet fully God, taking on the sins of man so we can be brought to God. And let's not lose the significance of the water.

Genesis 1-2 talks about the spirit of God hovering over the face of the water. This picture of being uncreated and what does God do? He takes uncreation and makes it creation.

[28 : 13] So what's he doing in Exodus 14 to the Egyptians? Because they don't have a mediator. Well the water comes back in over the top, it's an act of uncreation, it's an act of decreation as they're disintegrated.

Do you see it's judgment? God judges the Egyptians and gets glory for himself, that for enslaving his people they're called to account. But let's not make the fatal error to think that Israel was good and the Egyptians were bad, that's not it.

The Israelites would have tried to fight back against the Egyptians if they could. But they couldn't, they didn't have the technology. Why is Israel saved and Egypt isn't simply because God showed his grace to his people and not to the Egyptians.

Moses stretched out hands over waters of God's wrath and saw them separate so his people could cross over and be safe. Jesus stretched out his hands on a cruel Roman cross and was thrown into the sea of God's wrath for us so that we might cross over and be safe forever.

Jesus was decreed and judged so that we could be recreated and set free. There's beautiful bookends to this story. In Exodus chapter 2 what do we start with?

[29 : 41] We start with Hebrew infant boys littering the banks of the Nile as Egypt kills and performs this infanticide.

The end of chapter 14 what do we have? We have Hebrew men the soldiers who came to once again enslave them littered on the shore dead as God judges them for their acts against his people.

Salvation you see is only possible through a mediator and that's what we perfectly have in Jesus. Just imagine then if Sky News had a roving reporter amidst the Israelites just after they've crossed over and kind of George Alagia or one of those guys gets up and puts the microphone in their face of let's call him Jeremiah and says Jeremiah how is it going?

This is what he might say. He says I was a foreigner in a foreign land not my home. I was in cruel bondage and under judgment and sentenced to death but I took shelter under the blood of the lamb.

I followed my mediator to freedom and he stretched his hand so I could cross over by grace. Now we're on the way to the promised land but we're not there yet.

[31 : 03] We're following God's lead. He's going to give us this law to make us a distinct people and he's going to dwell with us in the tabernacle to remind us constantly of our need of his grace.

forgiveness. One day we'll arrive home to be with him in the place he has prepared and we'll receive fully all that he has promised. It's not radically different is it to what we might say this side of the cross.

As Christians all that language is exactly what we see in the New Testament. Two quick things to finish. number one. God gets them out and then gives them the law.

Grace first. He's not getting them out because they've obeyed. He's getting them out so they can obey. They're obeying as a response to grace not a requirement for grace.

And this bit blew my mind this week. Just go back to verse 13. Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.

[32 : 08] Do you know what's so beautiful about that phrase? The deliverance of the Lord could literally be the phrase God saves. Now we all know one bit of Hebrew and it's that that God saves.

Because it's the word Yeshua. Which will become in Aramaic the word Jesus. So literally God says to his people through Moses stand still don't do anything.

Your salvation will come and it will be through looking at the Jesus of the Lord. It will be by staring at Jesus where you will be saved. And so what do we learn from Exodus 14?

We learn that salvation is freedom from bondage and we need to work it into every part of our lives. Salvation is crossing over by grace. Trusting that God has done it and walking through from one side to the other instantaneous justification.

And salvation is only possible through the mediator. There is a great difference between getting free and getting safe. life. But in the Lord Jesus he sets us free and will bring us safely all the way home because he's that good to us.

[33 : 32] Why don't we pray? The writer to the Hebrews says how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

And so Lord as we've looked at your son through the lens of Exodus 14, Father we're so thankful to him. We're so thankful for him. And Father we pray that his news of free grace, of absolute forgiveness, might work its way into every part of our lives.

Father that we would trust him that he's won where we failed, that he succeeded where we flunked, and that it is in him and only in him that we are righteous and able to cross over.

Father may grace be so precious to us. And Father may we love him for what he's done. May we be those this morning who simply stand still and gaze upon him, gazing upon him in his perfect life, in his atoning death, and in his glorious resurrection that keeps us free for all eternity.

Father bless us and be with us. Commit these things to our hearts we pray in Jesus glorious name. Amen. Thank you.

[35 : 02] Thank you. Thank you. If you have any questions about anything that's being said this morning then please feel free to speak to either myself or the John after the service. When I'm going to move into short...