

Getting Out (TGC 2011)

by Tim Keller

This sermon delves into the story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, highlighting the layers of bondage they were freed from, the grace that enabled their crossing over, and the ultimate mediator, Jesus Christ, who brings salvation. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the depth of God's grace, the role of faith in salvation, and the transformation that comes from gratitude and holiness in response to God's saving work.

Scripture: Exodus 14:13, Romans 3:23, 1 Timothy 2:5, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "God's Grace", "Faith and Salvation"

Description

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Transcript

Thank you, Don. I was afraid he would lay it on a little thick, but there's payback possibilities for me on Thursday morning. So if I wasn't happy with the introduction, I can just do the same thing to him, but I'll think about it.

I think all of us who are speaking here feel a little bit like the actor in a play who is not only part of the story on the stage, but who also occasionally turns aside and speaks to the audience. You know, the character, he's in the story, but he's also talking to the audience. And we want to, I want to preach Christ from the Old Testament to you, and I also want to teach you something about how to preach Christ from the Old Testament.

So I feel like I need to both preach to you, at the same time do asides, and say, now by the way, when you do that, do this. And that's a challenge, but it's also a great deal of fun. Let me read to you the account of the, you might say the climax of the Exodus, the epitome of the Exodus, which is the crossing of the Red Sea, Exodus 14, I'm going to start verse 5, go to the end.

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. 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-Heroth opposite Baal-Zephan. 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 salvation 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 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 water 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 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. 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. 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 the fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion.

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. 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. And 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 back 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 on their left.

That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. 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." That's God's Word. It's hard to overstate the importance of the Red Sea Crossing for the rest of the Bible.

Alec Matier, the Old Testament scholar, says there's at least two dozen other direct references to the Red Sea Crossing in the rest of the Old Testament, and there's just probably innumerable allusions to it. In the New Testament, significant statements like this. Matthew, of course, says about Jesus, out of Egypt I've called my son, quoting Hosea 11, which was a reference to the Exodus.

The son in Hosea's saying was Israel, and therefore Matthew is making a very direct connection between Jesus' work and the Old Testament Exodus and the Red Sea Crossing. When you go to Luke chapter 9, the Transfiguration, in Luke's version we have Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah who appear and speak to Him, but as many of you know, you read the English text and it will say that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about His departure, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem, and it looks like it's talking about His death, which of course it was, except that the Greek word there is the word Exodus. A rather big hint that Luke is saying that what Jesus was going to accomplish in Jerusalem was the ultimate getting out, the ultimate Exodus.

And then you go to Hebrews, and of course Hebrews 3 and 4 says that Jesus is the greater Moses, that Moses points to Jesus, and then in Hebrews 11 verse 29 it says that by faith the Israelites passed through the sea on dry land, but the Egyptians couldn't do it because they didn't have faith. And it's very clear Hebrews 11 is talking about Christian faith, and it's using the Red Sea Crossing as a paradigm for Christian faith. And probably the most significant of all the references is 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul makes that enigmatic statement that says that when the Israelites passed through the cloud and the sea, they were baptized into Moses.

And then just a few verses later it talks about that and several other incidents in verse 6, Paul says, these things were written as examples for us, us Christians. If there's one Old Testament passage that the New Testament invites us to read Christocentrically, invites us to see it as a paradigm of Christ's salvation, it's this one. And I'll never forget, my goodness, nearly 40 years ago, sitting in R.C. Sproul's living room in Stallstown, Pennsylvania, and for the first time I'd never heard of him, J. Alec Mateer, Old Testament scholar from Britain, was visiting.

And I was in the room on the floor with a bunch of other college kids, seminary kids, and R.C. Sproul said, tell us something about whether, you know, something about the connection of the Old Testament and the New Testament. And Alec Mateer says this, he says, think about it, think about it. Think of what an Israelite would say on the way to Israel, I mean on the way to Canaan, having come out of the Red Sea and so forth.

Here's what an Israelite would say. If you said, who are you? And he would say, I was in a foreign land under the sentence of death in bondage, but I took shelter under the blood of the Lamb. And my mediator, our mediator, led us out and we crossed over.

And now we're on our way to the promised land, but we're not there yet. But He's given us His law to make us a community, and He's given us the tabernacle, because you have to live by grace and forgiveness. And His presence is in our midst, and He's going to stay with us until we get home.

And Mateer says, that's exactly what a Christian says, almost word for word. And I said, huh, my 23-year-old self said, huh. Now, what can we learn just from the Red Sea crossing about Jesus' salvation, our salvation, and three things.

Salvation is about getting out, okay, but it's about, number one, what we're getting out of, number two, how we're getting out of it, and number three, why we can get out of it. And the answer of the text is, about our salvation is, what we get out of, bondage with layers. How we get out of it, crossing over by grace.

Why we can get out of it, the mediator. That's what the Exodus text points us to in the rest of the Bible, it's the answer. The rest of the Bible, without the rest of the Bible, we wouldn't know this, but with the rest of the Bible, we know that this is what Exodus is pointing to.

First, what we get out of it. Notice a couple things, what we get out of, what Christ's salvation is all about. It's about getting us out of bondage, that's what the word redemption means.

If you look in the very beginning, it says, when the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their mind, they said, what have we done? We have lost the Israelites' services. What a nice way of putting it. We've lost their services.

Well, why didn't they just go out and hire someone else? No, they lost their entire slave labor force. They were slaves. One of the most interesting things about this is, he says, we're going to go get them.

We let them go, changed our minds, we're going to go get them. We're going to go bring them back, or we're going to kill them, or we're going to do both. And when the old slave masters, who had given them up, get on their chariots and they head on to try to get them back, and the Israelites see them coming, they were terrified and they said, was it because there were no graves in Egypt? Why have you brought us out here? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone? Didn't we say it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians? When you came to us, Moses, and you said, let's go, we said, it would be better to stay here.

We like it here. Is that really what they said? Let's see. Let's see.

Okay, Exodus 429, and Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites and told them everything the Lord had said and performed the signs before the people and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down in worship. That's not quite what they remember.

And by the way, this isn't the last time they're going to do this. Just a couple, two chapters later, listen, in Egypt we sat around with pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, and you have brought us into the desert to starve. Now, there's no more basic word in the Bible than redemption, and you know, at least the Greek version of the word redemption originally meant to loose.

Redemption means to be released from bondage, and at the very heart of our understanding what salvation is all about is release from bondage. The Israelites are a picture of us. They were in bondage, but this bondage has layers.

They got out of bondage, see that? And yet, even though they were out of bondage, I mean, they were let go, they were freed. See? Official word, this get out, you're freed. And then the slave masters said, no, we want you back.

And what's interesting, of course, is that not only were they objectively free from bondage, and yet now the bondage, the old slave masters want them back, but inside, subjectively in their heart, they're not free, they're still slaves. You know, you can take the people out of slavery, but you can't take the slavery out of

the people very easily. And this is something we see all through the Bible, which is that the redemption of Jesus, the redemption of God, is to redeem us from bondage, but there are layers to it.

Let me give you four, just quickly. First of all, there, according, this is Paul, of course, Christian salvation, our salvation means we're freed from the law objectively. We were in bondage to the law objectively, we were under guilt, we were under condemnation, but through Jesus, we get out.

What do you mean under condemnation? It means that we have sinned, we don't love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, we don't love our neighbor as ourselves, and we're under God's wrath. What's His wrath? Well, God's wrath is His settled, judicial opposition to evil and to sin, and that's on us. It's an objective guilt, it's an objective wrath, and we're in bondage to it.

We were under the law, but through Jesus, we get out, and there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and we're no longer under law but under grace, so that's an objective thing. Ah, but there's layers here, because secondly, there's also bondage to the law subjectively. The whole book of Galatians is about people who, from what we can tell, were objectively freed from guilt.

They seemed to have really believed, and yet they were going back into a form of works righteousness, and I'll tell you why this is. I think, this is a bit of a speculation, but as a pastor over the years, and just as a human being, I think deep down inside, maybe it's because of the image of God, I think deep down inside, everybody knows they should be perfect. We all know we should be perfect.

Now parenting can do something with this basic intuition. Some parents aggravate it by being very, very cruel, by being impossible to please, by being very, very, maybe abusive, and that natural belief that we all have that we really ought to be perfect gets aggravated to the place where some kids grow up needing to prove themselves, hating themselves. Now there's another kind of bad parenting, which I'll call it self-esteemism, and that's where you just tell your child over and over again, because you watch popular, you know, you imbibe popular culture, and you're supposed to tell your children, you can do anything you want.

You can be anyone you want. Okay, I'm 23 years old, I'm 5'3", I'm 125 pounds, and if you want to be an NFL linebacker, you just have to go for it with all you've got, because, you see, you have to climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow, and when you do that to kids, they do grow up feeling like, with this incredible sense of entitlement, and seemingly impossible to make, it almost seems impossible to make them feel ashamed or guilty for anything, yet I don't believe you can put out what all human beings know, and that is that we should be perfect, that we should love God, that we should love our neighbor. When I've watched people, no matter who they are, no matter how they've been parented, if you have a chance as a pastor to sit with somebody who's dying, and they start to open up to you, it's like, you know, when a boat goes out at night to sea and watches the lights go out slowly, as you get further away, the lights go out until there's maybe one or two bright ones, and then almost the last light that goes out is a sense of regret, the sense that I haven't lived the life I should have lived.

We all know, deep down, we should be perfect, and I want you to know that just being told a couple times, now that you believe in Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven, there's no condemnation for you, you are accepted, that doesn't put that out. We go right back to works righteousness, it's just a natural default mode of the human heart, and we stay in bondage, we stay in bondage to the law, subjectively, even if we're not actually in bondage to the law anymore, objectively, because we've believed and we have, you know, we've become Christians. But let me give you another layer, there's the bondage, I guess, to your

sin nature.

Paul talks about this, certainly, in Romans 6, 14 and 15, when he says, you're no longer under law, but don't sin. It's very possible to not be under the law, meaning your objective guilt's taken away, you know, you're free from the objective, you're free from the law objectively, but Paul says it's very possible to still be a slave to sin, and he says, don't be a slave to sin, why? You know, W.G.T. Shedd, with two Ds, he's not very well-known, he ought to be well-known, he's a Reformed theologian, a 19th century American Reformed theologian, some of his... I think they're still in print, a couple of volumes of his sermons. He was a systematic theologian, but he's got a set of sermons called Sermons of the Natural Man, Sermons of the Spiritual Man, meaning basically evangelistic sermons and edifying sermons, and one of them, I can't remember where, he says, sin is the suicidal action of the human will against itself, and what he means is, very simple, when you do a sin, it makes it much easier to do it again, and much harder to avoid, much harder to resist.

Every time you sin, every little sin, you're destroying your ability to resist that sin, every single time, it's a suicidal action of the... sin is the suicidal action of the human will against itself, and that doesn't go away right away. When you accept Christ, when Christ accepts you, when that, you know, the objective guilt is taken away, there's still a tremendous amount of bondage to sinful habits. So you not only have a certain bondage to the law subjectively, there's a tendency to go back into works righteousness, there's a tendency, of course, we're still in bondage to our sin nature, and lastly, there's... we're still in bondage to idols.

If you're one of the two or three people in the world who's never heard me say anything about idols, let me... let me... let me give you a very brief... Well, I'll tell you why, because it's so important here to Exodus. If you love anything more than God, even though you believe in God, if there's anything in your life that's more important to your own significance or security than God, now we're talking about everybody here, then that is a kind of pseudo-God, it's a false God, it's a power in your life, it's a covenant master, you're kind of in a covenant with it in a way, and it will... it will continually say, serve me or die, just like Pharaoh. See objectively, Pharaoh is no longer the master, I mean he said go, and they're gone, and now Pharaoh comes back and says, I want you back.

And this happens in all our lives, let me give you an example because I know not all of you are ministers, but, you know, some of you are or want to be. This can be true for career, children, or your ministry. If you want to be a good minister, that's fine, and if things go wrong in your ministry, you know, you'll be sad, and if someone gets in the way of you doing a good job in your ministry, you'll be mad, and if... and if there's a threat to the future of your ministry, you'll be afraid.

But if your ministry and your success in ministry is actually more important to your self-image than what God says about you, if it's functionally an idol, it's more important to you than God. If you really are getting that belief that I know I'm an important person, I know that I'm worth something, I know I have value because I'm a successful minister. I mean, it's hard to know quite, you know, whether that's what's happened to you, but here's what happens.

When someone gets in the way of your ministry, you get incredibly angry, not just angry, but just vehemently angry. When something goes wrong with your ministry, you're not just sad, you melt down. You completely lose it.

And when something threatens your ministry, you're not just afraid, you're not just worried, you are absolutely petrified. You are paralyzed with fear. Why? Those emotions just about eat you up.

Those are your old covenant masters coming back, in spite of the fact you've given your life to Christ, coming back and saying, serve me or you will die. You need me. You can't live without me.

And that's the point. The point is there's still slavishness in the Israelites' heart. You still have the things that you thought you were free from, and actually in one sense you are, but in another sense they come back and they rattle their sabers.

In fact, in Romans chapter 6, years ago, I was trying to understand it, and I read David Martin Lloyd-Jones' series of sermons on Romans 6. And he has a fascinating illustration there. Lloyd-Jones did not use extended illustrations much. He didn't tell stories.

He used illustrations a lot, but his was a very important one. It helped me unlock what Paul was talking about. And it was very simple, interesting for a British man to do this.

He says, imagine that you were a slave in the southern United States before the Emancipation Proclamation. Imagine you're a slave. And what that means was you couldn't vote, you had no power.

Somebody could beat you up. Somebody probably could kill you. You don't have rights.

And, therefore, when you were in town and some white person told you, do this or do that and was abusive to you, you were very frightened and you did anything they said. I say, now it's ten years later, Emancipation Proclamation's over, you've got rights, but you walk into town, a white person starts to yell at you, even though you know with your head, hey, I have some rights here, you're still scared, you're still acting like a slave. He says that actually is the condition of every Christian.

You know, but you don't know that you've been saved. You know that you should be free. If you really believed what you do believe, if you believed in your heart what you know with your head, and that is there is no condemnation for you because you're in Christ Jesus.

God regards you as perfect in Christ's righteousness. And then you let what people think of you. You let, you know, you let other people's opinion, you let success or failure in this or that endeavor just build you up or destroy you.

What that means is you're still a slave in your heart, even though theoretically, technically, objectively, you're not. God's freed you from things that you still are enslaved to, and you just haven't worked it in. In other words, well, you know, systematic theology class gives you, it says, well, God's salvation, we are freed, past tense from the penalty of sin, we are getting free, present tense from the power of sin, and eventually we will be free from the very presence of sin.

You know, that's justification, sanctification, glorification. You've heard that, but ah, this is a story. That's abstract.

Here you have it. Here you have a picture of where we are. Redemption is about getting out of bondage, and it has layers.

And that's the reason why the great hymns, the great songs, the things that move you, talk about that. You know, along my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night, thine eye diffused a quickening

ray. I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed thee. It's true, and we do have those experiences, and yet every so often we look down and we find our heart's not free.

It's not free yet. So the first thing we learn about Jesus' salvation, about salvation, is salvation is about getting out. It's about getting out of bondage, but the bondage has layers.

What do we do about that? Well, let's keep going. Point two, how do we get out of it? What does the Red Sea story account tell us about not just what we're getting out of, but how we get out? And the answer, I already mentioned this, is crossing over by grace. In verse 13 and 14, when Moses hears them crying out, this is what Moses said in Boys is Classic, do not be afraid, stand firm and you will see, you know, my text, the deliverance of the Lord, the salvation of the Lord.

Of course, Charlton Heston says, behold and see. Well, he takes it right out. Behold and see the salvation of the Lord.

And, of course, he says here, be still, the Lord will fight for you. And actually, he says, see the deliverance the Lord will bring you. Now, on the one hand, the principle of grace could not, it couldn't be clearer.

Stand still, God's going to do your fighting. Watch, you can't do it, you can't perform it, you can't contribute to it. Stand still, you're not going to do a doggone thing about this deliverance.

God's going to do the whole thing. And when he says be still and trust the God who will fight for you, boy, does that come close to Romans 4, 5 that says, and now to him who worketh not, that's being still, but trust the God who justifies the ungodly, to him his faith is credited, his righteousness, boy, that comes awfully close. Be still, don't look at your works and let God receive a complete salvation done not by your works but by Christ's work.

So, there's the principle, but what I like here, we're not just given the principle of grace, we're given actually a wonderful image. How does that grace operate? It operates by crossing over. On one side of the Red Sea, they were within reach of their old false masters.

They were under sentence of death, you know. Pharaoh said, we're going to go get them, we're going to get them, or we're going to kill them. And when they were on that side of the sea, they were reachable, they were still under sentence of death.

But as soon as they crossed over, see, they crossed over, and when the Egyptians tried to cross over, there was an invisible warrior stopping them. And so the minute they crossed over, they crossed over from death to life. They crossed over from being under condemnation and being under the sentence of death, and they were no longer under the sentence of death.

And this is one of the reasons why we have a religion that is absolutely and utterly different than any other religion. You know, I've been saying this for 30 years, and every so often I look at even minor religions to make sure I'm not, you know, somebody's not going to get to, you know, preacher gotcha. So what about this religion over here? I hadn't heard of that one, let me read about it.

But no, I'll tell you, every other religion is like building a bridge. Here's the water. You know how you build a bridge.

You put a pylon down, then you put another pylon down, then you build a bridge out over that pylon, and then the bridge goes to there. And if the government changes and they run out of tax money, it's the bridge to nowhere. And there are a few like that.

Then you put down another pylon and you reach it out. And that's what every other religion is like. It's a process.

You're trying to get over the other side. You never feel like you've really quite arrived, but you're trying. I mean, everyone has something else.

I mean, every religion is an enlightenment, it is moral life. Everybody else is working their way across, not with Christianity. One minute, you're not regenerate.

Another minute, you are. One minute, you're not adopted. Another minute, you are.

What does it mean to be adopted? You either are or you aren't. There's no process. You're either in the kingdom of darkness or you've been transferred into the kingdom of His Son.

Think of all those statements and images that make Christianity unique. You either are a Christian or you're not a Christian. And I wonder, you know, here you have, you know, John chapter 5, 24.

I tell you the truth. Whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life.

Now, maybe John didn't actually have the Exodus in mind, but listen, this is Isaiah 51, verse 10. In Isaiah 51, verse 10, Isaiah says, Were you not the God who dried up the sea so that the redeemed could cross over? This idea of crossing over, this idea of going from death to life like that is something that Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to use as a little test analogy. Those of you who are pastors, it works.

The doctor used to say this, and he was trying to talk to somebody, trying to get a sense of where they were spiritually. He would say, well, let me ask you a question. Are you a Christian? I mean, are you a Christian today? And if the person said, and many, many people said, especially British people who always want to be very modest, they would say, well, I'm trying.

He never said what percentage, but he said an enormously high percentage of people. And when you ask them, are you a Christian? They say, well, I'm trying. And the doctor would proceed to explain to them that their answer indicated they had no idea what Christianity was about at all, not in the slightest, because he says, Christianity, what makes you a Christian is the change of status.

You're in this kingdom, now you're in this kingdom. You were out of the family of God, you're in the family of God. You were not born again, you were born again.

You were not justified, you were under the wrath of God, and now you're justified. Bang, it happens like that. Do you know the power of this? Here's Paul.

He's killed people. And we're told in Romans 7, somehow, at one point, the law of God seems to have broken through his self-righteousness. And he says, the commandment came home and it slew me.

And we're never quite sure just what that autobiographical note means, but it seems like that Paul began to realize what he had done. Cate Blanchett, in a movie, 2002 movie, called Heaven, not a very

well-known movie, but Cate Blanchett is one of the best actresses out there. And it's a movie about a woman, I think she was a teacher, just a normal woman, who was so upset about how a drug dealer was ruining the lives of children in a particular part of the city that she decided to, and no one would listen to her, the police wouldn't listen to her, she decided that she was going to detonate a bomb in the man's office and kill him, to kill a drug dealer with a bomb.

But what happens is a night watchman takes the bomb out, not knowing it was in a waste can, takes it into an elevator, takes it down, it explodes in the elevator and kills four people, including children. And in the movie, when they tell Cate Blanchett, who's a woman who loves children, she's a teacher, she's doing this for the children's sake, when she finds out that she has killed children, because she's such a great actress, you can just see her collapse. She just collapses, physically, spiritually.

She's a massive smoking wreckage. In a sense, she goes into a hell of guilt and shame. I have to use the word hell, just mainly because it's not just a guilty conscience, she just collapses, and she essentially goes into a hell of guilt and shame, and she never gets out of it the rest of the movie.

But Paul, Paul must have known that, Paul must have sensed that, Paul did sense that, and yet then he says, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. How can he say such a thing like that? He crossed over. He crossed over.

He didn't say, well, I've got a lot to atone for in my life. I mean, that's the normal, that's the way the heart works. That's a person who's really in bondage to the law, and still in bondage to the law.

But no, Paul says, now there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. He says, oh, I was the chief of sinners, and yet God is using me the most. You know, he's able to be that realistic.

He's unbelievably humble about who he is, and yet he's able, you know, there's no false modesty about him either. He's able to say, you know, I'm really, honestly, the most fruitful of all the apostles. It's not that hard to look.

Just add up the books in the New Testament, and you can see that. Who has the most? And yet, you know, he has that astounding boldness and humility at the same time. Why? He crossed over.

He knew where he stood. No, of course. He hadn't even begun to really change on the inside, but he knew where he stood with God.

It's astonishing. Oh, somebody says, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But, yes, of course.

All right, you're saved by grace apart from your good works. You're saved by grace apart from your moral efforts. But you've got to believe, don't you? You've got to believe.

And you've really got to believe with all your heart. Isn't that right? Because salvation is by faith. Don't do that.

You know what you're doing? Hey, look, even this text tells us something about that. I love the fact that it tells us that when they walk through, it says, the waters were divided and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on their right and a wall on their left. Now, I can tell you, some people, some of the Israelites walk through like this.

Look at this. God's on our side. Eat your heart out, Egyptians.

The Lord is fighting for us, and they walk through like that. I know there was a bunch of others that were walking through like this. I'm going to die, I'm going to die, I'm going to die, I'm going to die, I'm going to die.

Oh, my gosh. And you know what? They all walked through in completely different qualities of faith. They were all equally saved.

They were equally saved. Why? Because you're not saved because of the quality of your faith. You're saved because of the object of your faith, the Redeemer, the God who's fighting for you, see? And everything about this text says grace, grace, grace, grace, crossing over.

In fact, it's actually pretty wrong. I mean, there's a really interesting place where Charles Spurgeon was preaching on this. He talks about the fact that Moses says, Stand still, be still, and let God fight for you.

Very important. If you try to add to God's salvation, you subtract. If you try to do something to merit God's salvation, you actually haven't believed at all.

You're putting your faith in yourself. And so even to try to do a little bit. So Spurgeon does a good job of that.

And then at one point he says, I dare say you will think it a very easy thing to stand still, but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier learns not without years of teaching. I find that marching and quick marching are much easier to God's warriors than standing still. And then he goes on and says, The apostle seems to hint at this difficulty when he says stand fast.

To stand at ease in the midst of tribulation shows a veteran spirit, long experience, and much in grace. I'm afraid many people take what Spurgeon says and even take this text and say, You see, Moses says stand still and the Lord will fight for you. And a lot of people say now if I have enough faith, if I let go and let God, you know, God will fight my battles for me.

God will deal with these circumstances. I don't think that's what Exodus is saying. Exodus is saying stand still and see that God has already fought the big battle for you.

It's already been accomplished. If you're a Christian, you've already crossed over. I mean, sin and death has been dealt with, and all your other problems are flea bites in comparison with that.

And that's how you deal with your flea bites. Instead of looking at them as this big thing, you see what he's already done for you. So, what is Jesus' salvation according to the Red Sea? It's bondage.

It's freedom from bondage, though it has many layers. How does this salvation come? It comes, obviously, by grace, and it comes by crossing over. But now, we're not done, obviously, for a couple of reasons why.

And one of the reasons is we're still saying, well, how do we make sure that we bring to bear Christ's salvation so that these bondage layers we are increasingly free from? And the answer is number three, why is it possible? Why is it possible for us to get out? In other words, the Egyptians went through the water and were devastated, right? They were killed. But the Israelites went through the water. They were fine.

Now, why did the Israelites get off? Why did they get off? Let's go back to the water for a minute. Flood waters. If you go to most commentaries on Noah's flood, most commentaries on Noah's flood are going to

say, God could have judged the world a whole lot of ways, but water was significant.

Why? If you go back to Genesis 1, the very beginning, we see that darkness was upon the face of the waters, you know. Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved across the face of the waters, and then things began to happen. Instead of darkness, God separated darkness from the light, and there was day and night.

And God brought the waters together. He says they came together, and then there was land. When the Spirit of God moves across the faces of the water, it's the Spirit of God bringing order out of chaos.

The water, not only in the Bible, but actually in the ancient cultures surrounding Israel at the time, water represented chaos, justifiably so. Water is chaos. Water is death.

And yet God's creative spirit comes across the face of the water, and things get orderly. He brings order out of chaos. Therefore, when God uses the flood to destroy the world in the time of Noah, what He's actually doing is making a very appropriate judgment because it's what some people have called decreation.

What's happening is a reversal of creation. If you turn away from the Creator, you actually turn away from the goodness of creation, and disintegration and chaos is unleashed. Listen, you know that.

Those of you who are here who are married, if one of you hurts the other person, and the one who's hurt decides, I am not going to forgive him or her. You don't necessarily say that, but you don't. In other words, you're really bitter, you're really angry, you're refusing to forgive in a very small but very noticeable way.

You're unleashing chaos into your marriage until you obey. The wages of sin is disintegration, which is another way of saying death. What God was doing in the flood was He was actually unleashing the forces of chaos, which is a justifiable judgment.

It's an appropriate judgment because when you turn away from the Creator, you turn away from the goodness of creation, and you bring into your life decreation. You bring into your life disintegration, the reversal of creation. And many people have pointed out that that's what the plagues are.

Just before this incident, God visited Egypt with plagues, but what were those plagues? Same thing. See, as Pharaoh decided to resist the Creator, what came down into Egypt was what you can call decreation, disintegration. There was darkness upon the face of the land, and this actually might be called the 11th plague because what is happening here? Egypt's sin has unleashed the forces of chaos, and they've experienced decreation, and they're being judged, and the floodwaters represent what happens to you when you turn away from God.

Okay, we don't mind that because the Egyptians, right? They get it. Good. But you know what? If you say, well, the Israelites were good people, the Egyptians were bad people, so of course the Israelites would get through it.

You haven't read your Bible very far. Not only do you see their petulance and their childishness right here, but the fact is they're not just fools. They're murderous fools.

They just don't have the same power as the Egyptians. That's all. They can't do the genocide right now because they don't have the technology.

They're no better. They're no better. So the real question is why, if God's waters of judgment are standing up on both sides, and it comes down on the Egyptians, rightly, why didn't it come down on the Israelites? And of course you know the answer.

The Israelites had a mediator. Now, verse 14 says, and then everyone cried out. You know, it says everyone cried out.

They said, didn't we say to you to Egypt, leave us alone, let us serve the Egyptians, and so on. Then you get down to verse 15, and the Lord said to Moses, why are you crying out to me? Now, commentators go two ways on this. See, earlier you have the Israelites crying out in rebellion.

We wish we were back in Egypt. God shows up and rebukes Moses. There's no indication Moses was doing that.

Now, I've seen a number of liberal commentaries say, well, of course Moses must have been doing that or God wouldn't have rebuked him. But I've seen a couple other thoughtful commentaries say, well, why? Later on, by the way, in verse 21 we're told Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, but before the verse is over it says, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back. Here's what you've got.

You've got one man who is so identified with the Israelites that their guilt is upon him, and a man so identified with God that God's power is coming through him. He's the man in the middle. He's so identified with the people that he gets rebuked for their sin.

And he's so identified with God that he's a vehicle for God's saving power. But guess what? I know a better mediator. And I'll tell you what.

We don't have in Jesus Christ just a mediator who was fully man and close to God. We have a mediator who is fully God and fully man. And not only that, we don't have a mediator who's rebuked for one sin in one verse.

Here's what Jesus Christ got. When Jonah was in the boat and the storm of God's wrath and the waves of God's wrath were about to sink the boat, Jonah turns to all the sailors and says, this is a storm of God's wrath, and the only way you're going to be saved is throw me in. You throw me in, and you'll be saved.

Throw me in, and you'll be saved. And they throw him in, and they're saved. And Jesus had the audacity to say, a greater than Jonah is here.

Talking about himself, what does that mean? It means that Jesus Christ on the cross was thrown into that ocean of God's wrath. You know, Jonah said, I'm cut off from thy sight, which, of course, isn't true. It's a figure of speech.

But when Jesus Christ said, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, he was being put under an ocean of God's wrath. In fact, all the plagues came down on Jesus. Darkness came down on Jesus.

What was going on? Jesus Christ was being decreed so that you and I could be recreated. Jesus Christ received the reality that all these floodwaters and all this stuff points to. He received the reality of it in his life.

And that's the reason why all the other things that we're talking about are possible. It's the reason why we can be brought out. And the reason why we can keep going back to the well of Jesus' salvation to deal

with the layer after layer after layer of bondage.

At one point, Moses, as the mediator, went to God, remember, and said, when God said, I've had it with these people, and Moses said, save them and blot my name out of the book. And God didn't do it. But our mediator, Jesus Christ, God did.

Jesus is the ultimate mediator, and it's the reason why you and I can cross over. And here's where we are. We're done.

But here's what I want you to see. Where are the children of Israel going? They're going to Sinai. One of the easiest ways to explain the gospel to somebody from the Old Testament is to say, God didn't give them the law, and once they started to obey, he brought them out.

He actually brought them out and then gave them the law. That's the gospel. It's not like, because I'm obeying God, now I'm saved.

Oh, no. Because I've been saved by his free grace, now I want to obey God. And they're on their way to Sinai.

And more than that, Leviticus 11, 45, God says, I brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, be holy. Now, what this means is this.

The more you meditate on what he has done, the more you see the floodwaters go over his head in your heart, in your mind's eye, the more you see what he's done, the more holy you will be. Anybody who says to me, well, I know I shouldn't be doing that. I know I'm doing that.

I really shouldn't be doing that. I know God forgives me. You don't know the first thing about forgiveness.

Nobody who understands the grace of God would ever take sin lightly. The more you deal with the free grace of God, the more you work it into your heart, the more you understand this, the more you understand that your salvation has nothing to do with how you behave, the more that's going to change your behavior. The more radically it's going to change your behavior.

I brought you out of Egypt that you be holy. I brought you out of Egypt to take you to Sinai and give you the law. And when you think about this, why do you sin? Sometimes I think you sin just because it's the easiest way.

Let the gratitude you should have for God just fill your heart with so much joy, you say, I'm not going to do that. But an awful lot of the reasons why we sin is because of the idols. We sin because we're afraid, because we're being controlled by these things, and the grace of God frees us from those things.

And therefore, anybody who says, the more you talk about how it's free, it's all free, it's nothing to do not only with my works, it's not even got to do with the quality of my faith, well, then, you know, it doesn't matter how you live. You still haven't, you haven't even begun to come to grips with it, have you? Not in the slightest. Not in the slightest.

When God says, I brought you out of Egypt so you can be holy, that's the same thing as, we're saved by faith alone, but not by faith which remains alone. You're saved by faith not with works, but if your works do not grow out of faith, then you don't have any faith. And that's actually all through the Exodus narrative, too.

It's amazing. It's the gospel. It is just the gospel.

You know, Paul, though he didn't, Moses, though he didn't, could have written the old hymn, Well may the accuser roar of sins that I have done, I know them all and thousands more, Jehovah knoweth none. By the way, if there's anybody here, like I said, I'm done, but not quite. This is an awfully big group of people.

I don't care how Christian-y a conference this is, there's gotta be somebody here who says, I hadn't really ever heard it like that before. I've always been moved by, one of Charles and John Wesley's friends, William Holland, was converted one night when they were reading aloud from Luther's preface, Commentary on the Galatians, and there's a place where Luther says, what then? Have we nothing to do? No, nothing. But accept Christ, who is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Have we nothing to do? No, nothing. And when, be still. Do you realize what the Hebrew is basically there? When it says, be still and see the salvation of the Lord? It's essentially the word Yeshua.

Be still and look at the Jesus of the Lord. Be still. Be still.

Realize all your salvation is in him. Realize you have nothing to contribute at all. And look at him and that will make you holy.

And actually it'll make you a Christian if you're not one now. Nathan Cole became a Christian listening to George Whitefield preach in Middletown, Connecticut in 1744. He was practically illiterate, but he wrote what it was like to listen to him preach and how he became a Christian.

I've always been moved by it. He said this. My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound.

And by God's grace, my old foundation was broken up and I saw that my righteousness could not save me. If that's beginning to happen to you now, go on and don't stop until you know what this means. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all our sin.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you that through Jesus Christ we get out. We have gotten out and we still need to get out.

We've gotten out and we still have false masters telling us that you've got to serve me or die. We're supposed to be still and look at your salvation, especially at the salvation of Jesus, and we don't know how to be still. But we do thank you for the richness of our salvation.

We thank you that it is a well we can always keep going back to and it never goes dry. We also thank you for the richness of your word that we have in the most vivid and imaginative and creative way, not just a set of principles and bullet points, but we've got great accounts, we've got history, we've got moving narratives that drive the gospel to our heart where it needs to be if we're going to become more and more conformed to the image of your son in whose name we pray. Amen.

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