

Exodus Chapter 14

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[0 : 00] Exodus chapter 14. We've been back in Exodus in the last few weeks looking at God's leading of his people, how he brought them out of Egypt, out of slavery, out of darkness, into that place of freedom, and is leading them on that way to the promised land. And we saw last week, the end of chapter 13, how the Lord was guiding and leading. And we're going to carry on with that into chapter 14, and we're going to read the whole of chapter 14 together now.

So if you've got that in your Bible and open, that'll be helpful, be able to follow along with the events, probably one of the most famous events in the Old Testament, and something that is full of instruction about God and how he helps us.

So Exodus 14, beginning at verse 1. Then the Lord said to Moses, tell the Israelites to turn back and camp near Pi-Hihiroth, between Migdal and the sea. They are to camp by the sea directly opposite Baal-Zephon. Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. So the Israelites did this.

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-Hihiroth, opposite Baal-Zephon. 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 you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone?

[2 : 40] 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, you'll 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, 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 the 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 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. 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 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. 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. Amazing, wonderful, incredible events.

[5 : 45] Well, we're in Exodus 14, and we read the chapter just a few minutes ago, so we're going to go back there again and think about this tremendous, momentous event in the life of God's people, and recognize again that this God is our God, and he is unchanging. I don't know if you've ever had mice in your house. It's usually this sort of time of the year that they tend to come in and begin to gnaw away at things and make a scratching noise and all that sort of thing, and perhaps you've had to set a trap for the mice to catch them. It's not the nicest thing to do, is it really, particularly when you hear it go snap and find their remnants in the morning, but perhaps you're one of those people who's got a little bit of a soft heart, and you say, well, I'm going to use a humane mouse trap and let it out in the field somewhere to freeze to death and starve. And whichever you have to use, whether it's a conventional mouse trap or a humane mouse trap, you have to use bait, of course.

You have to use bait to catch the mouse. The mouse? Yeah, the mouse. And if you're a great fan of Tom and Jerry, as I am, then, of course, in those cartoons, it's always the smelliest, stinkiest cheese, isn't it?

And it sort of wafts its way to the mouse hole and lures the mouse out. But if you've got an experience, I've got a little bit of experience of catching mice, and they're usually actually like chocolate rather than cheese. Whether your mice are the same, I don't know. Setting a trap. Well, when we read Exodus 14, at least the beginning of Exodus 14, it appears to me that God is leading his people into a trap. Verse 3, he says to them that Pharaoh will think that they are hemmed in by the desert. And although they think themselves that they're going to be caught, they feel in a trap and caught. They cry out later on. Verse 11, was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you led us here to die? The fact of the matter is that they were really the bait, in one sense, so that God could ambush Pharaoh and his army. At the end of chapter 4 there, I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.

And when we read the events there and we read through what happened, it is pretty much a destruction, a gruesome destruction, of drowning of thousands of men and horses.

But this ambush that was initiated by God and led to Pharaoh's army's destruction is not the vengeful action of a spiteful God. God didn't destroy Pharaoh's armies because he was angry with him or hated him or because he was in some way destructive and vengeful, but rather because it was the only way that he could secure the salvation, the protection of his people. His concern, in one sense, his actions are the actions, the defensive actions of a loving Heavenly Father on behalf of his children.

[9 : 10] And as I said when we looked at this reading just earlier, last week we thought about this truth, that God does lead us and overrules in our lives to work out his purposes for us. And we saw that God doesn't lead us very often by direct and straight ways. He doesn't lead us by the most easiest way or the quickest way, but God's way is the best way. And all the way through, when we are Christians, he leads us and he leads us by his presence with us. And for the people here, they had the pillar of fire and cloud.

And of course, we saw that that is a picture remembering the Lord Jesus, who is always with us, said to his disciples, I am with you always at the very end of time. And as Christians, we have that assurance and that confidence. So I want us to look at these amazing events, these incredible events, and ask how they teach us something more about God's leading, how God leads us in our lives today, how God works in our lives to bring about those things that are his will, his purpose. And the first thing I want to say is one of the things that may surprise us is that just as God led his people there into a trap. So he leads us also in our lives to places where we feel trapped.

In fact, that may be how some of us feel this very morning, that in our lives there is a sense in which we are trapped. Even as Christians, we feel that way. We know that we've trusted God. We know we've put our faith in Jesus Christ. We know that we've said, Lord, we want you to be the Lord of my life, the God of my life. We want you to lead me and direct me in the way I should go. I'm trusting you.

And yet we feel that we, like the Hebrews, have been caught now between the devil and the Red Sea, that we are trapped in circumstances beyond our control. And those traps, of course, can come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. One of the commonest traps that many people find themselves in today is a financial trap. They feel caught because of the mortgage that they have to pay off, or the loan that hangs over them, or the credit card. It may just be they feel trapped because of the daily grind of living costs, feeding themselves, their family, and clothing them. Feel trapped because they never seem to get out of the red into the black. There's always that other bill coming through the door.

Another demand on the limited resources. We can feel trapped by finances. It may be, of course, that we feel very trapped in our place of employment, in our job, in the work that we do. We can't seem to escape from it. We may even feel trapped because we haven't got a job.

[12:12] We're trapped in unemployment. How horrible that can be. But in that job, it's an unhappy situation. We feel as if we're trapped there. There doesn't seem any way out. Just the daily grind of Monday to Friday. It may well be that some of us feel trapped in an unhappy relationship.

A relationship that's very demanding, wearying, draining. Maybe it's even a relationship which is abusive, unpleasant, but we just can't get out of it. We just can't escape from it.

Some of us here, I'm sure, we feel that we are trapped in a frail body, a sickly body, a weak body. We're trapped in this cocoon, as it were, which doesn't do what it's supposed to do, which feels pain and discomfort, which feels at times so powerless and weak. Perhaps we're just trapped by people's expectations of us, how we should behave, what we should do. There are so many different ways that we can feel trapped. And because we are Christians and because we have trusted God, the only way that we can understand this is that God has led us into this trap. God has led us and brought us into this place. That's exactly what the Hebrews felt like there, didn't they? When they saw the Pharaoh's soldiers coming, they were terrified and cried out to the Lord and said to Moses, why have you brought us here? Why are we in this place?

Yet, as we shall see, God had good reason for leading them there. God had a plan, a purpose, for their benefit, for their blessing, in bringing them into a place where, at that moment in time, they felt hemmed in, trapped, captured. Why did God do that? Why did God bring them into that place? Well, because although Pharaoh had released the people, and we saw that a little earlier, although they'd been set free from slavery in Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land, the agreement had been originally that Pharaoh would only let them go for three days, so they could go to the desert and worship the Lord. Back in chapter 12 and verse 31, up, leave my people, Pharaoh says, go and worship the Lord as you've requested. It was that part of the deal. And when they didn't return after three days, which they weren't going to do, it was obvious that Pharaoh was going to come after them and seek to recapture them, which is exactly, of course, what he does, because they were valuable slaves, around about two million people, certainly probably in a region of 600,000 men, who would all been slaves working and building for nothing Pharaoh's empire. God knew that he would send his armies after them. God knew that his heart would indeed be hardened and that he would change his mind, because we've seen that all the way through with Pharaoh. Like every one of us, he's fickle. And so to secure their complete release, God had to set this trap to set them free completely, so that the army could be defeated. Otherwise, what would happen, of course, is that they would be forever looking over their shoulders. They would never be truly free from their past. There'd always be that thought, well, what about if Pharaoh comes with the army? What about if he changed his mind? What about if he comes and takes us back again?

[15:53] God wanted them to be completely free of those fears, those concerns. But the other reason why God did this and set this trap to destroy and to overcome Pharaoh was, of course, because the people, the Hebrews, were people who had no faith. They were people who had grown up in Egypt. They knew nothing of the Lord their God. They'd know nothing about what he'd done for them through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the promises that he'd given them about Joseph and how the Lord had raised him up and helped them. In many ways, they felt that God, they were nominal people. They were people who said they had a belief in God, but they knew nothing of

God, no relationship with him. They just felt that he had deserted them and left them and given them up to this life of slavery and misery and sufferings.

They had to be brought to a place of real faith in the Lord their God. They had to be brought to that place of knowing him, fearing him, and trusting him, which, as we see at the end of the chapters, is indeed the result. When the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him. So that was the second reason. One, to set them completely free, one, to give them faith. So they might see that here is a God they can trust. Here is a God they can depend upon. Here is a God they can relate to and who cares and loves them.

But before we come to see what God did, we need to see, again, just things to avoid. The Hebrews, the Israelites, made some very foolish mistakes when they were trapped. The same sort of mistakes that we do when we feel trapped or hemmed in or unable to go our own way, if I put it that way.

They made several mistakes. First of all, they complained. No, they weren't English. They were Hebrews. But they still complained. They moaned. In fact, as we go on later in the story, we find that they made a complete occupation of it. They became, amongst the whole world, the best of the lot.

But here in verse 11, we have them speaking sarcastically in complaining. Why is it that, was it because there's no graves in Egypt that you brought us to die? See, sarcasm is nothing new.

[18 : 20] It's something that has always been there. They moaned about their situation, but in reality, they moaned not against Moses, but against God. They were complaining about God's leading of them, God's care of them. There is a mixture we see of self-pity, unbelief. It doesn't change their situation. It doesn't make things better. In fact, it leads them into greater sin. And one of the things that we do, almost inevitably, as soon as we feel ourselves in a position which we are unhappy in, or feel ourselves trapped in, is that we moan. We complain. We moan to one another. We moan to our family. We moan to our partners. We moan and complain. But really, in the sense, we're moaning against God if we're Christians. Because really, we know we shouldn't do it, and that's why we do it to one another. But really, in our hearts, we're doing it against God. Why have you let us hear God?

Why have you done this to us? Why have you allowed this to happen to me? And again, it's a mixture of self-pity and unbelief. And if we don't deal with it, if we don't stop it, if we don't put an end to it, then we will find ourselves getting more and more unhappy, but more and more falling into greater sins. Exactly what happens later on with the Hebrews. Second thing, of course, is this. When we're complaining and moaning, therefore, we're obviously blaming somebody else. And of course, their blame turns to Moses. They said, to Moses, was it because? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone?

Poor old Moses. Unfortunately, Moses, I've got one piece of advice to you. Get used to it. Because as he goes through the 40 years in the wilderness, that's all they're going to do, is they're going to moan and complain and blame him. That's a very typical response, isn't it? We like a scapegoat. We like to blame anybody but ourselves for our predicament or circumstances. We'll blame the government. We'll blame our parents. We'll blame our partners. We'll blame the pastor. We'll blame anybody we can for the situation in which we are in, because we will not take upon ourselves responsibility. And of course, we'll blame God as well. Now, it may well be, of course, that indeed, the situation we find ourselves is our fault. We may be in that jam financially and say, why is it we've got all these debts when on the drive outside is a brand new 15-plate car, which we've got on HP? Or because we've overstretched ourselves and said, well, I wanted that holiday in the Caribbean, even if I couldn't afford it, and I put it on the card. And so, and so, we may be in those straits or situations because of our own foolishness, our own sinful actions. But the reality is, even if that is the case, it does not remove God's care for us. It does not remove his love for us. It does not remove his ability to change the situation. The reason for their complaining, the reason for their blaming, of course, is because they were afraid. And the third thing we need to avoid is fearing. We need to avoid moaning, avoid blaming, and avoid fearing. They were full of fear. They were terrified, we're told there in verse 10. They could see looming up against them all sorts of tragedy and travesty. Fear is, of course, the outcome of faithlessness.

[22 : 00] If we have faith, we do not have fear. And if we have fear, we do not have faith. They deny God's love for them or care for them. And so it is with us. When these circumstances appear, when we find ourselves in this place of entrapment, our response is, if we're not careful to moan, to

blame, because we're afraid. We're afraid that our house may be repossessed. We're afraid that things are only going to get worse. We're afraid of what the future holds. We're afraid to take action or whatever it may be. But ultimately, that fear is due to the fact that we are not trusting God. We don't believe He loves us anymore. We don't believe that He cares for us anymore.

And what happens is that we fall away and we backslide. It's a serious, serious response. And all these actions we see in the Hebrews are true of us. So what should we do? What should we do when we are trapped? What should we do if we feel ourselves in those positions and situations where we're hemmed in and fast approaching are all the horrors and the terrors that we fear most, not just the Egyptian army, but whatever it may be? If we don't make these mistakes, what should we do?

Well, Moses, of course, tells them what to do. Moses, in the midst of all that's going on, is the one who has faith. And he speaks to them and he tells them what to do. And in the words of Corporal Jones, he says, don't panic. Don't panic. Don't be afraid. Stand firm and you'll see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. They must have felt like running away when they saw the Egyptians coming to us and thought, let's scatter. Let's run. Some of you go north. Some go south. Some go east or west. Let's hide. And let's hope perhaps we can creep around the outside at night time. Let's do something.

But then if they'd have panicked and scattered, they would not have been saved. They would not have seen God's rescue plan fulfilled. We can miss God's exit strategy for us.

We can miss the way out and the faith that it gives us and the glory it gives God by panicking and exhausting ourselves out of our predicaments. Because that's all we do. We usually don't solve the problem. We usually just panic. We usually wear ourselves out and we usually get nowhere and we fail to see God's goodness. We fail to give him glory. We fail to see his answer. It doesn't mean that we must do nothing, as we shall see, but we aren't to panic. That's fear again.

[24 : 49] Secondly, Moses says rather than panic, he says, stand firm, which is much more than doing nothing. It's refraining from panicking. It's holding ourselves together. As he puts it in verse 14, you need only be still. And I don't think he's just talking about physically, but emotionally, mentally, spiritually. It's an act of faith to be still before God. The psalmist often says, those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Waiting upon God is renewing our faith and trust in him and being at peace with him. Remember when Jesus was on the lake with the disciples and they were in a terrible panic. And he spoke to the wind and the waves and he said to them, peace be still. And we're told that when he said that, the wind and the waves died down and it was completely calm. It had been a tempest just a few moments earlier, a great storm a few moments earlier. But Jesus spoke, be still, and it was still. We're to stand firm in the sense of standing upon God's promises, standing upon his faithfulness, standing upon the evidence of his love, standing still to find peace in him, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace in God. Peace in what he has done for us in the past. Peace about what he will do in the future as well. But the question, of course, is, well, why?

Why should we trust God when we're in the midst of this trap? Why should we trust God when he is the one who has led us and brought us, since we believe and trust in him, into this place which is so hard and terrifying and fearful? Why should we trust him? Well, we should trust him for that very reason that the Lord has led us there. Verse 1, at the very start, we're told, the Lord said to Moses, tell the Israelites to turn back and camp near Pi-hi-haroth. They were led there. They were guided there. They hadn't been disobedient to God. They hadn't gone their own way. Yes, I said before that we may be in that fix because of our own foolishness or sin or whatever it may be, but it may well be, more often than not, that we are in a place where we are meant to be when we've been obedient to God.

We've kept his word. We've sought to be faithful to him. We've sought to go where he's led us to go, and yet we're still trapped. Well, that's good. We can trust him because then we know that he has led us here, and he's led us here with a reason, a reason that is for our good and for his great glory and praise. There's a hymn that we sing. I didn't sing it this morning. I nearly did, but changed it. Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us. The trouble is we sing songs that we don't believe in, or we sing songs which are prayers which we don't mean, and we doubt that God answers us.

But for the Christian, the sovereign rule of God over our lives is the only firm foundation. If we believe in a God who is scatty, a God who is changeable, a God who can't be trusted, or a God who is out of control, or the world that is out of control, or our lives are out of control, then we shall

always be fearful. The only place in which there is peace in our present situation in the world today, with all that's been going on as well, and for our lives, and for our future, and for our children, all those things, the only place of peace is that we have faith in the sovereign rule of God, that he really is God. Because he's either God or he's not. If he's not God, well, there's no point trusting in him and believing in him. If he is God, then we better do so.

[28 : 57] If we lose sight of that unchanging truth that God is in control, that he is on the throne, that he has our lives in his hands and is working in all things for his purposes, then we shall be fearful all day, all night. We should trust him as well because the Lord is with us. There's that lovely, right in the midst of all that's going on, verse 24, during the last watch of the night, the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud of the Egyptian army. That pillar of fire and cloud was that symbol of God's presence. He was there. He dwelt with them. It wasn't God said, right, off you go. You're on your own. Sort it out. You're by yourself. No. God never left them, and he will never leave us.

He will never leave you. He's made that promise. Hebrews 13, 5 reminds us of it. God has said, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. Of course, that's one of the difficulties, isn't it? When we're in the midst of that trap, when we're in the midst of that place which we are struggling with and looking to find a way out, we feel as if God has abandoned us or left us. We feel alone, but he hasn't. His promise is the same. He is not affected by the situation of our lives.

He is not changed. He remains the same. He's faithful. He's with you. You may not see him. You may not feel him. You may find it hard to pray to him, but he is with you. He said it, not me.

He's promised it, and he will keep that promise. The third thing is here, we should trust him because he is the Lord who acts on our behalf. He works for us. Here, he fights for us. Verse 14, the Lord will fight for you. You need only be still. Even the Egyptians recognized that. Verse 25, the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt. God wasn't just standing on the sidelines watching what was going on while the Pharaoh and his armies were coming in for the kill against the Hebrews. He wasn't just saying, oh, goodness me, I'm not sure what they're going to do or how they're going to work this out. I'm powerless to intercede. No, he's actively working. And so we find something happens, don't we? When the Egyptians come down into the Red Sea, chasing after them, the wheels start coming off. The chariots start collapsing, getting stuck.

God fights for you. God works for you. God is active for you. The Lord is not standing at the sideline of your life, looking in and thinking, I wonder what they're going to do, how they're going to get themselves out of this. Rather, he is actively engaged, hands-on, in your life, organizing, arranging, and working for your good and for his glory. We don't see so often the things that God is doing for us, but the reality that he is. The reality that he will protect us. He will show his care for us. He will, because of who he is. He fights for you. And, of course, we're to trust the Lord, because ultimately, in his good time and in his own way, he will bring us out of that place of being trapped, in his good time and in his good way. Verse 21 and 22, what happens? We're told that the pillar of cloud stood and protected the people, that the cloud of fire on one side, a pillar of cloud on the other, stood in between and protected the Israelites. Why? Because through the night, we're told that east wind, God sent an east wind, verse 21, turned the sea back, drove the sea back, and divided the waters. That incredible miracle of God. It's not a natural phenomenon. It wasn't just there happened to be an east wind that blew it. It can't be done. It was really the act and work of

[33 : 07] God. But God did it in his own time, didn't he? He took all night about it. You wondered about that. The God who created the world in six days, who is able to stop the sun moving in the sky, that's another part of the Bible, the God who is able to do all these incredible miracles, what did he take all night? I don't know. He just did, because that's what he wanted to do, because that was his way of doing it, because he was teaching, instructing his people in faith. That must have been a very long night for them, mustn't it? There's the Egyptians. They're waiting, waiting. What will happen? What will happen? What a long night it must have seemed for them, waiting for the waters to pass, the wind howling, the waves crashing, Pharaoh's chariots just a cloud distance behind them.

Did the people have reason to worry? Did they have any reason to fear? Did they have any reason to panic?

No, they didn't. God proved himself faithful in the morning. God did it. He brought them through. He set them free. So it is with you and I. It may seem that we're in this place and been in this place a long time, this trap that we feel, this hemming in we feel in, and becoming more and more worried,

more and more upset, more and more fearful. But God will bring us through and out in his own time and in his own way. And we can look and look at the Red Sea before us and look at the Pharaoh's armies behind us and say, I cannot possibly conceive of any way that God can bring me out of this. Just because we can't conceive of it doesn't mean that God can't conceive of it. He's got a much better imagination than you and me.

He can see the way out, clear as day. He knows what he's doing. But the only way that you and I are going to grow to trust him and have faith in him is by passing through such times of confinement. It's only when God brings us into a tight spot, perhaps that we pray. It's only when God brings us into a difficult time that we actually look to him, we recognize our own weakness, we are humbled by our own inability, and we ask him to display his power in our lives, to work on our behalf. That's when our faith grows. That's the only way our faith grows.

And it's the only way that we see his goodness proven. How do we know that God is good? How do we know that he helps us? How do we know that he is real? Because we've seen it. We've experienced it. We know it.

[35 : 58] It's not just imagination. It's not just stories that we read, wonderful, glorious stories in the Bible we read which are true. So, that doesn't mean that we know these things are real. It's because of our experience of the living God in our lives day by day, bringing us through times of trial, difficulty, times of tight problems, hardships, sorrows, which everybody faces in life, but the Christian has a foundation, has a place of peace, and to be still in.

Just listen to these closing verses that I'll read to you from 1 Corinthians 10, 11, and following. Paul's also been talking about the people in the desert. These things happen to them as examples, and were written down as warnings for us on whom the fulfillment of time has come. That's God's plans coming to fulfillment.

So, if you think you are standing firm, i.e. in your own strength, be careful that you don't fall. No temptation has seized you except what is common to all people. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. Let's pray together.

O Lord, our God, every one of us is known to you, and every one of us, as we've been thinking and considering your word, you've been registering and seeing our thoughts, our worries, our fears. You know, Lord, those of us who feel ourselves in some way trapped, you feel in some way that we are hemmed in and cannot see a way out. I only see fear and worry and anxiety ahead. But, Lord, we thank you that you do not change. We thank you that you deal with us and have led us as you led your people.

[38 : 08] And we thank you, Lord, that you have a purpose in these things, that we might grow in faith and trust in you, that we might see your goodness, might see your works, might see the way that you are dealing with us. And we know that you have a purpose for our blessing. Help us in the midst of all that is going on around about us and within our lives, not to fear or be panicky, not to moan and complain, not to blame others. Help us, O Lord, to be still in faith, in trust, to look to you, to seek your will and your way. Thank you that you are able to bring about a miracle, even greater than you did with the Red Sea. And, Lord, we ask that we might, with faith and with hope, rest in you.

Again, we pray for those of us here this morning who do not know you, have read about you, heard about you, but have no experience of you. Lord, come and meet with us. Come and make yourself known to us. This seems so alien to us, so weird to us. But, Lord, we know that it will only make sense when we truly experience your grace. Open our hearts, our minds to your love, that we might know what it is to be set free from doubt and ignorance and fear and be brought into the light of your love and mercy. We ask these things now as we ask all our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen.