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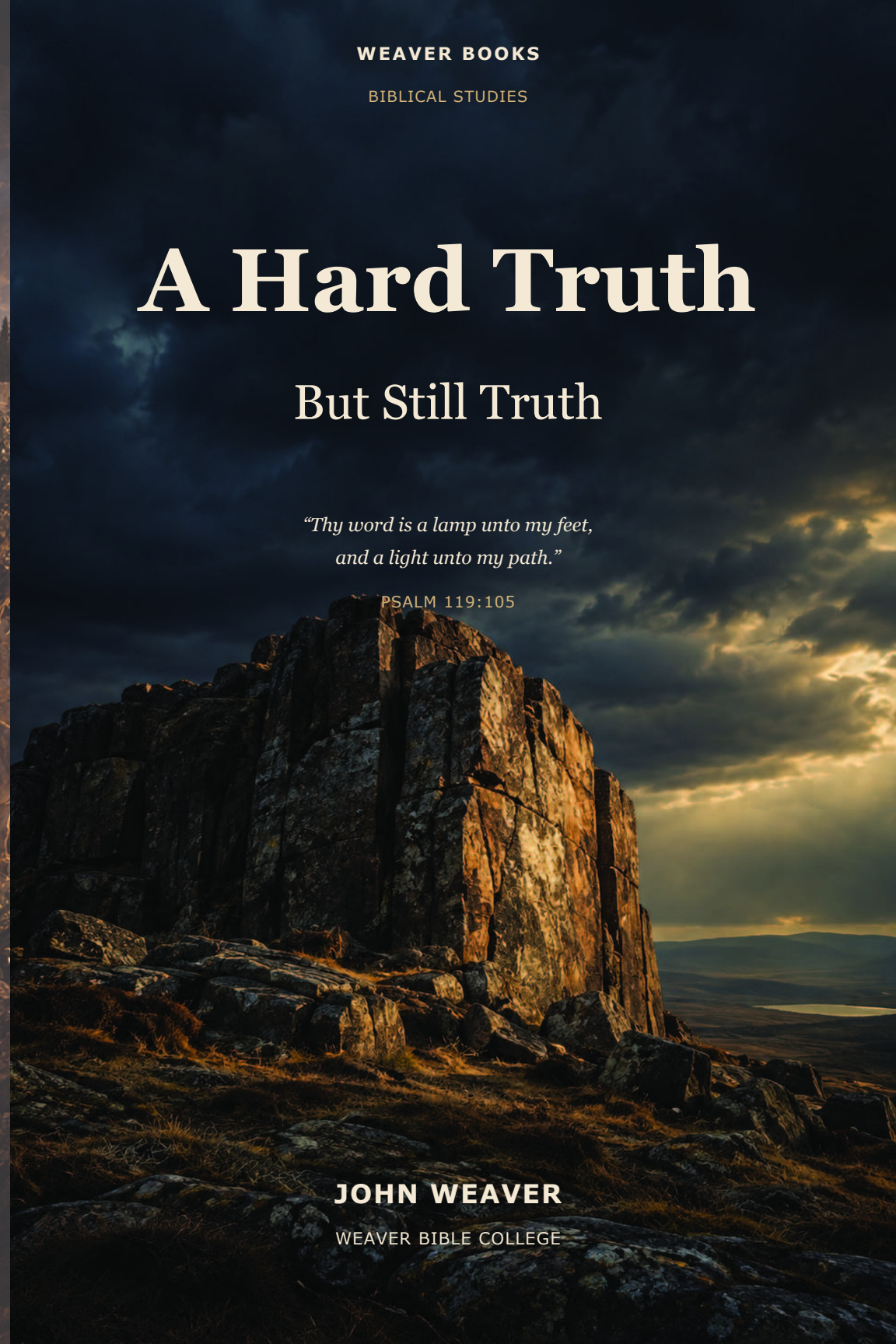
BIBLICAL STUDIES

A Hard Truth

But Still Truth

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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105

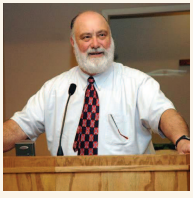
The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.

DEUTERONOMY 29:29, EXCERPT

Some truths resist our preferences rather than our understanding. John Weaver examines the sovereignty, judgment, and purposes of God through the Scriptures, including the account of Pharaoh. These messages call readers to face difficult passages honestly and to distinguish what God reveals from what human sentiment would prefer Him to say.

“The hard truth is not that we cannot see it, understand it, or that it is unclear.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

A Hard Truth But Still Truth

Part One of Two

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 14:1-12 (KJV)

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdal and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it you shall encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land. The wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he shall follow after them. And I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so.

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled. And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this thing, that we've let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel. And the

children of Israel went out with a high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, and the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes. And, behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid. And the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in this wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in this wilderness.

A Hard Truth But Still True

Introduction: The Nature of Hard Truths

There are many hard truths in the Bible. They are hard not only because of our ignorance, but also because they go against our flesh. Our lack of spiritual understanding and discernment, as well as our depravity, makes truth hard and difficult. Many times, however, hard truths are hard simply because we are unaccustomed to them.

The truth is that unsaved individuals cannot see, hear, understand, or comprehend any Bible truth. I have had people tell me that they cannot understand the Bible. I look at them in amazement and ask, “You mean you cannot understand, ‘Ye must be born again’? Or, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall surely die’?” To me, that is so simple. Yet the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

An unsaved man does not have the ability or faculties to understand truth. When someone says they cannot understand the Bible, either they are not really reading, studying, and seeking the Lord for understanding and enlightenment, or they are lost as a hound dog, and that is all there is to it.

Fallen man by nature is proud, arrogant, and haughty. Man likes to think that the world was created for him and that the world revolves around him. The truth is that the world is theocentric. Theos is the word for God. Theocentric simply means God-centered. It is not anthropocentric. Anthropos is the Greek word for man.

An anthropocentric world revolves around man. The truth is that it revolves around God and His will. In fact, the Bible tells us in Revelation chapter 4 and verse 11, "For thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Everything revolves around God; it does not revolve around man.

But fallen man likes to think that God is at his disposal, that God exists simply to satisfy his needs, and to serve and bless him. Consequently, fallen man is constantly worshiping the creature more than the Creator. He also takes all the blessings that God gives for granted and tends to think that God is obligated to bless him regardless of how he lives, and whether or not he serves and honors Him. Fallen man has been taught that God loves him and that, no matter how he acts, disobeys, blasphemes, or rebels, God still loves him.

Misunderstanding God's Love

Such is not biblical truth, but that is what fallen man has been taught. Fallen man usually misinterprets the love of God. It is true that God is love; the Bible says God is love. But fallen man usually misinterprets that to mean, "If God loves me, and if God is love, then God will never judge me. God is not going to bring me into justice, and God is not going to hold me accountable for my sins. He would never condemn me because He is love."

Many people pit one attribute against another. It is true that God is love, but the Bible also says that God is righteous, holy, and just. The only God who exists is the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible, and He is exactly the way He has revealed Himself. To say, "I believe that God is love," while disbelieving that God is holy, righteous, and just, is to pick and choose the attributes one wants to believe, denying the others or pitting one totally against another.

They are twisting and perverting the Scripture to their own destruction. Now let me show you. Hold Exodus chapter 14; we are going to be looking there, but turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter chapter 3. I want you to see what the Apostle Peter says, not only concerning the Bible, but particularly concerning some of the writings of the Apostle Paul. Remember, the message is dealing with hard truth, and we are going to see some hard truth momentarily.

Notice 2 Peter chapter 3, beginning with verse 14: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Now watch verse 15: "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

The Problem with Hard Sayings

He is saying that there are some things in the Bible that are hard to be understood. Even in the writings of the Apostle Paul, there are things that are very difficult to understand. Therefore, those who are unlearned and unstable take them and wrest them to their own destruction. The problem is this: when many people run against something very hard and difficult, they simply run away from it. They refuse to face it.

I remember when the Lord saved me and called me to preach many years ago. I had a strong desire to learn the Scripture, so I put myself on a reading schedule. I read through the Old Testament every month and the New Testament every week. I was doing an awful lot of reading. Then I ran across some words that really bothered me because I did not understand them. So I went to a pastor friend who, at that time, had been preaching for over thirty years.

I said, "I need your help." He said, "Well sure, I'm glad to help you." I said, "I'm running across some things in Scripture that I don't understand, and I want you to explain them to me." He said, "Fine,

what are they?" I said, "I run across in the Old Testament and in the New Testament these words: elect, election, predestination. I don't understand those things, and I would like you to explain them to me."

I have never forgotten what he told me, nor my response. The first thing he said was, “Well, John, there are some things in the Bible that we are not meant to understand, and we just leave them alone.” Then he said, “There are some things that kill our soul-winning zeal, and we just let them alone too.”

I stood there for a moment with my mouth hanging open. I looked at him and said, “It just appears to me that if God revealed them in His Word, He meant for us to understand them.” I said, “Secondly, it appears to me that any soul winning that the Bible kills ought to be killed anyhow.” Then I turned around and left. He went one way, and I went the other way.

You cannot run from things just because they are hard or difficult, or because you think you do not understand them or do not have the answer. A lot of people simply refuse to accept them, believe them, or bow to them. Consequently, if they cannot comprehend something, they walk away from it, and sometimes even walk away from the truth.

Truth is still truth whether you like it or not, whether you believe it or not, whether you understand it or not, and whether you bow to it or not. I want to point out that even our Lord had problems with people when it came to hard truth.

In John chapter 6, Jesus Christ taught that He was indeed the bread of life. He said, “This is that bread that came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: but he that eateth this bread shall live forever,” speaking of Himself. The passage then says: “These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh

profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

"But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. He said therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Why did they walk no more with him?

"This is a hard saying. Who can hear it? Who can swallow it? Who can understand it? Who can comprehend it?" Because it was hard, because it was difficult, because it went against their flesh, they walked away and left it. As believers, as children of faith, we may not understand certain truths or be able to comprehend them. However, we believe them simply because God has revealed them. We bow to Him and say, "Lord I believe and I will trust you until you give me light, until you give me illumination and enable me to understand." We hold them fast and believe them, even though we do not always understand them. Whatever God has revealed, He has revealed for our good and His glory. Scripture says in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Reprobation and Election in Exodus 14

When you look back in Exodus chapter 14, you find a passage that gives us some hard truth. The hard truth is not that we cannot see it, understand it, or that it is unclear. It is hard because it is flesh-withering, and we do not even like to think about it. It deals with God's judgment and wrath, as well as God's sovereign power and sovereign choice. It concerns reprobation. Have you ever heard the word reprobation? It simply means that God passes over certain individuals.

He withholds grace from them, allows them to continue in their sin and rebellion, and permits them to live as they please. Then He judges them for their actions. There is certainly nothing unjust in that. They are not saved, they will not be saved, and they do not

desire to be saved. They eagerly and willingly defy and resist anything righteous, holy, and godly.

In Exodus chapter 14, Pharaoh is an excellent illustration of reprobation. In fact, I will go further and tell you that in this passage the Israelites are an excellent illustration of election, and the Egyptians are an excellent illustration of reprobation.

I want to give you some quotes to show you that this doctrine is not only historic, but has been taught down through the ages. Dr. Loraine Boettner said, “The doctrine of absolute predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life.”

“The terms elect and election imply the terms non-elect and reprobation. When some are chosen out of others, when some are chosen out, others are left not chosen. The high privileges and glorious destiny of the former are not shared with the latter. This too is of God. We believe that from all eternity God has intended to leave some of Adam's posterity in their sins and that the decisive factor in the life of each is to be found only in God's will.”

"As Mosley has said, the whole race after the fall was one mass of perdition. And it pleased God of His own sovereign mercy to rescue some, and to leave others where they were, to raise some to glory, giving them such grace as necessarily qualified them for it, and abandon the rest from whom He withheld such grace to eternal punishment." All Boettner is saying is this: God chose some, and God chose to leave others. It is just that simple. It is like when David went down to that brook and chose five smooth stones. He left the other stones. He did nothing to the other stones; they were still stones, and they were still dead. He simply left them. That is what God has done. He has chosen some to eternal life, and the others He left to themselves.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, after teaching on the doctrine of election, says, "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the inscrutable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth, or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures to pass by, and ordain them to

dishonour, and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice."

When we look in Exodus chapter 14, we will see two pictures: a picture of election, where God chose Israel, and a picture of reprobation, where God passed over and judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians. So let us look at the first three verses. We will cover only three points today; the last two points will come next Sunday, Lord willing. This is part one of "A Hard Truth."

The Divine Plan to Entice Pharaoh

Exodus 14:1-3 says, "Now the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdal and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it you shall encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."

We have in this passage a divine plan. If you go back and read Exodus chapters 5 through 11, you will find that God has gotten many victories not only over Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but also over the gods of Egypt. God was fighting against Pharaoh, and there is a reason; He was also fighting against the Egyptians. But many people do not understand that those ten plagues were not just against the Egyptians; they were also against the gods of the Egyptians. Have you ever wondered why the firstborn of every family in Egypt had to die?

Why was that the last plague? Because Pharaoh himself claimed to be a god. Obviously, if he was a god, he could save his own child. But he could not save his own child, nor the children of any of his people, because he was not God. Exodus chapter 12 and verse 12 states it very clearly: God is speaking, and He says, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." God was also fighting against the false gods in Egypt.

If I were to take the time to go back and review all of these plagues that God had struck Egypt with, and Pharaoh particularly, one would

think that after so many defeats and so many times that Pharaoh had to cry, "Uncle, I give up," he would finally understand. "Yeah, you were right. Pray and let this plague pass through me." After all of these defeats, one would think that Pharaoh and the people would wise up and say, "Yeah, our gods are false. The God of Israel is the one true and the living God. And I've had enough of this. I just, I just give up. I surrender."

You would think that, but you would be thinking wrong. Fallen man is not that wise. Fallen man wickedly thinks that somehow he is going to ultimately prevail and dethrone God. He thinks that he can outwit God. God, in Exodus chapter 14, sovereignly plans one last episode in the life of Pharaoh and his armies. He plans to completely destroy them and have them honor His righteous justice.

God said, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them. And I will be honored upon Pharaoh and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so. Note that God said, "I will be honored upon Pharaoh and all of his hosts." God plans this one final episode to completely destroy Pharaoh and his army and to get honor for Himself, because Pharaoh has been wickedly fighting against God.

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, He did not lead them in a straight line. It is like being in Valdosta, Georgia, and wanting to go to Ocala: the easiest thing is to get on 75 and head south. From where Israel was to where they would cross and enter the Promised Land, it was basically a straight line, but God did not take them in a straight line. He zigzagged them around, and here is one reason why. Exodus 13:17 says, “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent, when they see war and they return to Egypt.” God led them around, perhaps from Valdosta to Monticello, then toward the coast, and back around.

In other words, it was a zigzag pattern. This convinced Pharaoh that neither God nor the children of Israel knew where they were going or what they were doing. They appeared confused and unable to escape. Who in the world would camp nearly two million people in front of the sea, with wilderness on each side and possible

fortifications as well, leaving no way of escape? The only avenue was the way they had come, and Pharaoh and his army were closing in on it. The Bible says in verse 2 that the children of Israel turned and encamped before Pi-hahiroth.

Pi-hahiroth was the entrance, or the straits, of Hiroth, where two great mountains enclosed them on both sides as they marched between them. Later, the passage mentions Migdal. Migdal was also a city in Egypt, and it was thought that an Egyptian garrison was there. It also mentions Baal-zephon in verse 2, another high, fortified position that undoubtedly held a garrison of Egyptian soldiers.

Moses and all these people were encamping, and they were actually hemmed in. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown describe it this way: "The Israelites had now completed their three days journey. And at Etham the decisive step would have to be taken whether they would celebrate their intended feast and return or march onwards by the head of the Red Sea into the desert with a view to a final departure. They were already on the borders of the desert, and a short march would have placed them beyond the reach of pursuit, as the chariots of Egypt could have made little progress over dry and yielding sand. But at Etham, instead of pursuing their journey eastward with the sea on their right, they were suddenly commanded to diverge to the south, keeping the gulf on their left, a route which not only detained them lingering on the confines of Egypt, but in adopting it, they actually turned their backs on the land of which they had set out to obtain the possession. A movement so unexpected and of the which the ultimate design was carefully concealed, could not but excite the astonishment of all, even of Moses himself, although from his implicit faith in the wisdom and power of the heavenly guide he obeyed."

The object was to entice Pharaoh to pursue, in order that the moral effect which the judgments on Egypt had produced in releasing God's people from bondage might be further extended over the nations by the awful events at the Red Sea. Here was God's divine plan: He was going to entice Pharaoh to attack, just as He put a hook in the nose of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. In Isaiah 37:29, God said to him, "Because thy rage against me, and thy

tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest."

Sennacherib was raving against God and was going to destroy Jerusalem and Judah. God said, "I'll put my hook in your nose. I'll put my bridle in your lips. I'll turn you back. You'll go back the way that you came." He then died at the hands of his own sons while worshiping his false god. God was designing to destroy Pharaoh in the same way. He was going to catch Pharaoh as one would catch a fish.

A Divine Prerogative

The Divine Prerogative: Hardening Pharaoh's Heart

You are going to dangle the bait in front of him and excite him to attack. That is exactly what God is doing.

So here is this divine plan. Secondly, notice a divine prerogative. Think about this carefully. If God is going to entice Pharaoh to attack His people, what will guarantee that Pharaoh will take the bait? You might have a big bass under a rock, with the prettiest lure, the best-smelling lure, or the world's quickest lure. You can throw it right in front of that bass, but that does not mean it will come out and get it. What, then, will guarantee that Pharaoh will follow?

Here is the divine prerogative. Watch, if you would, verse 3. God says, "For Pharaoh will say..." He said, "I know Pharaoh. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, and the wilderness has shut them in." Now here is the guarantee.

"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so.

First, note in verse 3 that Pharaoh was absolutely convinced the children of Israel were ignorant of the geography of the land, that they had fallen into a trap, and that they could not extricate themselves. They were defenseless, trapped, and he knew it. His depravity, wounded pride, ruthless ambition, desire to vindicate

himself, and desire to vindicate his false gods would cause him to fall into the trap. Pharaoh was going to do that, but God said, "I'm going to make doubly sure." So in verse 4, "I will harden his heart." In order to guarantee that Pharaoh would take the bait, God sovereignly hardened his heart.

As you read through Exodus, you will find many times, when God began sending the plagues upon Egypt, that the Bible says Pharaoh hardened his heart. Pharaoh hardened his own heart. But God said before the contest ever began, to Moses, "I'll harden his heart." In Exodus 7:3, He told Moses, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

The natural consequence of sin and rebellion is to harden your heart as well. But here God sovereignly hardened Pharaoh's heart. The word hardened literally means to strengthen, to make strong, to make resolute, and to make courageous. This is what God did: He sovereignly allowed Pharaoh to think, "I can win this thing. I can overthrow God. I can dethrone God."

"I can get these Israelites back. I can win." Fallen man is so absolutely stupid, vain, arrogant, and ignorant that he thinks he can outwit and outfight the sovereign God of heaven and earth. That is what God allowed Pharaoh to think. That is what every tyrant and every wicked man thinks. Psalm 10:4 says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek God: God is not in all his thoughts." Pharaoh, in the pride of his heart, regretted allowing Israel to go and foolishly thought he could recapture or destroy them. Every tyrant is like every other tyrant: if they cannot control you, they will seek to destroy you. If you will not serve them, you are useless and expendable. Pharaoh was thinking, "I will either recapture them or kill them." It is just that simple.

Look at what most leaders have done to their own people: Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Castro, and Idi Amin. They do not care. Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, write: "When it was announced that Israel had fled the heart of Pharaoh and his servants turned against the people and they repented that they had let them go." They add: "When and whence the information came we are not told. The common opinion that it was brought after the Israelites changed their route has no foundation in the text. For the change in

Pharaoh's feelings toward the Israelites and his regret that he had let them go were caused not by the supposed mistake, but by their flight."

They further explain that the king and his servants regarded the exodus as a flight as soon as they recovered from the panic caused by the death of the firstborn and began considering the consequences of permitting the people to leave his service. This may have occurred as early as the second day after the exodus. Pharaoh would then have had time to collect chariots and horsemen and overtake Israel at Pi-hahiroth, since they could easily make the journey in two days or a day and a half, whereas the Israelites had taken more than three.

I am showing you this divine prerogative. It is indeed God's prerogative to either harden or soften our hearts. God does not owe salvation to anyone. The only thing that God owes anyone is justice. And to be absolutely honest, folks, I don't want that. If we get justice, we get what we deserve. If we get salvation, we get mercy and grace, and that is that which we do not deserve. I'm going to show you beforehand that actually each of us are in God's hands, and He may do with us as He pleases.

I will deal with this passage in more detail next week, Lord willing. But look in Romans 9 and verse 18 and see what the Scripture says about God's sovereign prerogative. Here is the conclusion the Apostle Paul came to after he gets through teaching: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." God said, "I'll have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and whom I will I will harden. It's my prerogative. I'm the Creator. I'm the God. I'm the Sovereign. That's my prerogative."

I must hasten to point out, as I've already stated, that the hardening of the heart and the deception of the mind and the false thought patterns usually arise from our own refusal to bow to God, His truth, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The hardening of our hearts is a natural consequence of sin, rebellion, and disobedience. When we love sin and rebellion and hate truth, our hearts are naturally hardened.

The Natural Consequence of Rejecting Truth

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9, we read, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." And, "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." So those who are perishing are deceived in unrighteousness. Why are they perishing, being deceived in unrighteousness? Here's why.

"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." What happens when you refuse to receive the love of the truth? Verse 11 says, "And for this cause"—because you refuse to receive the love of the truth—"God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." The natural consequence of sinning against God, rejecting God and His truth, is to be deceived, hardened, and led to believe a lie. If you do not believe the truth, the only thing left is a lie; thus you are deceived. It is not just Pharaoh whose heart is hardened. God traps all who hate Him in the same way, and it will lead to their own overthrow and destruction.

You must understand that whatever God does is right, just, and holy. The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 2 and verse 2, "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth." Whenever God judges, it will be holy, righteous, and true. Here is God's prerogative: God said, "I will harden his heart." "I'll let him think that he can really outfight Me and outwit Me, and I'll get the honor upon him." Pharaoh strengthened his own heart, and God strengthened his heart in that thought. Every man who fights against God thinks, "I'll be the exception. I'll get by. I'll win. Others may lose, but not me." It destroys them.

The Divine Predicament for Israel

Thirdly today, I want you to see a divine predicament found in verses 5–12 of Exodus 14. We have the Divine Plan, where God is going to entice Pharaoh, and the Divine Prerogative, where God is going to harden his heart. Now here is the Divine Predicament. Verse 5 says, "And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people."

"And they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel. And the children of Israel went out with a high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes. And, behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid. And the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there are no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

"Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in this wilderness."

Did God sovereignly plan this predicament? Absolutely. God was going to teach His enemies a lesson, and He was going to teach His people a lesson, but they would be two separate lessons. To His enemies, He would teach the lesson of His power, might, and justice. To His people, He would teach them of His grace, mercy, and deliverance.

God did harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would pursue Israel. "And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people." And they said, "Why have we done this? How can we be so stupid as to let these people go?" Thus God turned his heart and stirred him up against the children of Israel.

Did you know that God does stir up enemies against us? Usually He stirs up enemies against us because of our sin and rebellion against Him. All you have to do is read the book of Judges. The people would forsake God and follow Baal and Ashtaroth, and then God would deliver them into the hand of their enemies.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 11:8-14, 23-25 (KJV)

There are specific illustrations of this in the Bible. Consider Solomon, supposedly the wisest man that ever lived. He could not have been too wise to have a thousand wives. Can you imagine him going in to take a shower and having a thousand pair of pantyhose hanging on the shower curtain? Lord have mercy. When Solomon grew old, he not only loved too many women, but he also loved ungodly women, women whom God had forbidden him to marry, and he married them. When he grew old, he began to build altars for their false gods and serve those false gods.

"And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

"Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

"And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom." Notice that the Lord stirred up an adversary to Solomon. "And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah."

"And he gathered men unto him, and became a captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria." Notice,

if you would, God raised up these adversaries. He raised up these enemies.

Most of the predicaments that we find ourselves in come and arise out of our own stupidity, our own ignorance, our own sin, and our own rebellion. However, there are times when God sovereignly arranges a predicament in order to teach us to love Him, trust Him, and obey Him. It is in these predicaments that we learn that He is our trust and our stay, and that we must honor Him and worship Him. He is the only one who can deliver us.

Nothing happens by accident in a world that is ruled by God. Nothing. So God had sovereignly brought Israel into this predicament, into these straits from which no power, no human power, or human art could extricate them. Stop and think about the situation they were in for a moment. They had been brought out of the open country and were now alone.

They really had no place to hide. They were untrained in warfare, and they had no weapons. The sea was in front of them, mountains and fortresses were on either side of them, and Pharaoh and his vast army were coming rapidly behind them. They did not have any boats, and they did not have any time to build any boats. From all human circumstantial observances, they were dead meat. They were just dead meat. That was all there was to it.

Why did God bring them into this predicament? There were two obvious reasons based upon our text. First, He was going to teach the Egyptians—and Israel also, because Israel still had problems with this later on—that all the gods of Egypt were false gods and could not deliver. He was going to show them that if they served a false god, they would end up dead, just like Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. It was just that simple. Second, He was going to show them that He would be their deliverer. He would save them.

Their salvation, their deliverance, was nothing from their hand. It was all of God. You can apply this spiritually. I realize that when God saves people, He sometimes uses different circumstances, but in one sense, we are all alike. When God saves us, we know two things. First, there is none other God save the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Second, there is no way we

could ever save ourselves, and nothing and no one could ever save us but God. That is exactly where He put these people: in a predicament where they understood that, if they were ever delivered, it would be from God.

Now look at what happens in Exodus chapter 14, verse 10. Two truths are manifest here. First, the Israelites were frightfully fearful: “And when Pharaoh drew nigh the children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold the Egyptians marched after them and they were sore afraid and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.” Before you condemn them for being afraid, let me ask you a question: If you had been there, and you could not go forward, left, or right; if the mightiest army in the world at that time were marching in on you; if you had no weapons, no way to defend yourself, and nowhere to run, would not the tendency be to be fearfully frightened? Yes, and they were.

They did one right thing: they cried out to the Lord. But, secondly, they evidenced a faltering faith, even though they cried out to the Lord. Look at what they said in verses 11 and 12: “And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than we should die in this wilderness.”

Stop and think about this: how quickly we forget the grace, mercy, and power of God. These people had seen and experienced firsthand the grace, mercy, and power of God. They had observed all the plagues in Egypt. They knew what God had done to the Egyptians. They had also experienced the Passover. They were there when they applied the blood, and God passed over them and slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians. They knew firsthand the mighty grace, mercy, and power of God.

These people were not more than three days out of Egypt. Can we not remember God's grace, mercy, and deliverance for more than three days? Yet they said, "It would have been better for us to die in Egypt. Didn't we tell you? Just let us alone. Let us die in our servitude. We'll be happy just to be slaves till we die." In less than

three days, they had already forgotten everything God had done for them.

Well, I have news for you: plenty of Christians are like that today. It does not even take three days for most of us. Moses said in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 23, "And he"—that is, God—"brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." God brought Israel out of Egypt that He might bring them into the Promised Land. He did not bring them out to drop them in the wilderness or to let Pharaoh kill them all. He brought them out that He might bring them in.

Do you understand that this is applicable to our Christian life? God does not leave us. God does not forsake us. God always finishes what He starts. The Bible says in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." If God has started a work in you, if He has regenerated you, convicted you, and converted you, He is going to keep it up until He finishes it in eternity. He is not going to drop you or leave you in the wilderness.

Here is the divine predicament that these people are in, and you are going to see next week that it was God who worked it out. God places us in a predicament that He has sovereignly designed, and He will work it out. He is going to use that to teach us, and He is going to use it to teach other people as well. Here was a divine plan, a divine prerogative, and a divine predicament. Now let me make a couple of applications.

Applications: God's Sovereign Plan and Control

The first is this: Does God have a plan? The answer is absolutely. Ephesians 3:11 says, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Do you realize there is an eternal purpose, an eternal plan, which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord?

He is going to bring everything to pass. God has not only ordained the beginning; He has ordained the end, the means to the end, and every detail. Nothing is left to chance, fate, or fortune. That is why Acts 15:18 says, "Known unto God are all his works from the

beginning of the world." Everything is according to a divine purpose and a divine plan that God has in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark it down: there is a purpose for everything.

Here is the second application: God may do with us as He pleases. Stop and think about that. God may do with us as He pleases. God may save us, or God may damn us; He may kill us, or He may keep us alive.

SCRIPTURE READING - Deuteronomy 32:39-43; 1 Samuel 2:6-8 (KJV)

The truth is, we are in His hands. The sooner we realize that, the sooner we will submit to Him, bow to Him, and seek to honor, worship, and serve Him. Look in Deuteronomy 32, beginning at verse 39:

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."

God said, "I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. Neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. I am God alone." God is not in our hands; we are in His hands.

If you will turn to 1 Samuel chapter 2, Hannah is giving praise to the Lord. She has brought Samuel to the Lord, and this is what she says concerning God: "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them."

> Do you realize that God is God? As wicked and vile as many of our political leaders and world leaders are, they are in God's hands.

He can take them out whenever He wants to take them out. He will teach them as He teaches Pharaoh, and they will discover who God really is.

It is a hard truth when you realize that God is in control and we are not; that not everybody will be saved; and that you cannot save yourself. The only thing you can do is bow to God's truth and ask Him for grace and mercy.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray that You would teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. Give us grace to bow to these truths. Just because something is hard, may we not run from it or deny it, but bow before it. If we do not understand it, may we seek Thee for illumination and wait upon Thee for enlightenment, because it is Thy Word, and Thou art God. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

A Hard Truth But Still Truth

Part Two of Two

Let us turn to Exodus chapter 14. I did not intend for it to be so long since I returned to finish the message that I started, so I will give a rather lengthy introduction and reminder and go over the first message again to tie things together. Then, when I finish today, you will have everything in mind. The title of the message is “A Hard Truth, But Still Truth.”

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from

serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea.

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 14:2-20 (KJV)

beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a

cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

There are many hard truths in the Bible. They are hard and difficult not only because of our ignorance and lack of discernment, but also because they are flesh-withering. No one who is unconverted can understand God's truth. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The unsaved man does not have the spiritual discernment or spiritual ability to understand the Word of God.

People have told me through the years, "I find it very difficult to understand the Bible," or, "I can't understand the Bible." My response is usually one of two things: either you are not studying and seeking God for enlightenment, or you are just lost. If a man absolutely cannot understand anything in the Bible, there is really something dreadfully wrong.

Fallen man is so arrogant and proud. He believes that this world is anthropocentric—that God created the world to revolve around man and that man is the center of everything. But the world is theocentric; everything revolves around God. Fallen man likes to think that God was made for him, not that fallen man was made for God.

The Apostle Peter spoke of the writings of the Apostle Paul and said that some things in them were hard and difficult to understand. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3, verses 14 through 16: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned"

Peter is saying that Paul wrote some mighty weighty things, and the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. There are indeed many hard

truths in the Bible. In John chapter 6, our Lord was teaching that He Himself was the bread of life, and the people said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" The next verse says, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." It was very difficult, and they could not take it. We have to understand that there are indeed some very hard and difficult truths in the Bible.

Exodus chapter 14 dealt with what we would call election and reprobation. Election is where God chose Israel. Reprobation is where God bypassed the Egyptians, allowed them to sin, and then judged them for their sin and rebellion against Him.

The Westminster Confession, after speaking of election, says: "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." In Exodus chapter 14, some praise God's salvation and some praise God's condemnation, to the praise and glory of His justice.

Review of Part 1: Divine Plan, Prerogative, and Predicament

The first point was a divine plan. In the first three verses, God tells Moses to camp at a certain place, and the reason is given in verse 3: "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." Pharaoh would think that the children of Israel were entangled, dumb and stupid, ignorant of geography, and certainly not military-minded. They had entangled themselves and would be an easy target and an easy prey. God would bait the hook for Pharaoh, and Pharaoh would follow and take it. In verse 17, God says, "And, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

Moses has encamped Israel with the sea in front of them, the Egyptian fortresses on one side, and the mountains and wilderness on the other. Pharaoh and his army are coming upon them fast and furious. Here is the divine plan and the divine prerogative. God said

in verse 4, “And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them: and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

Pharaoh had been absolutely convinced that Moses and Israel knew nothing about the land. To make sure that Pharaoh took the bait, God said, “I'm going to harden his heart.” I know, and you know, that as you read through Exodus, the Bible often says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. But in Exodus 7:3, before Moses ever confronted Pharaoh, God said, “And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.”

The word “harden” simply means to strengthen, to make strong and resolute, and to make more courageous. How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? The answer is very simple: God allowed him to think that he could beat God, work everything out, overcome every obstacle, and be a god unto himself. That is it—pride, arrogance, and pure stupidity.

I also quoted Romans 9:18: “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” Obviously, God does indeed have the prerogative. He hardens, and He softens as well.

So we have the divine plan, the divine prerogative, and, thirdly, a divine predicament. The Israelites were encamped in a situation from which they basically could not get out. Usually, the predicaments we get ourselves into come from our own stupidity, sin, and rebellion. We think, “I wish I hadn't done this,” and, “Look what I've done and what I've gotten myself into.” But sometimes God sovereignly allows us to enter predicaments, not necessarily because of our sin or stupidity, but to teach us certain lessons. Certainly, He taught not only the Israelites, but the Egyptians as well.

The lessons learned by each group were entirely different as well. God had put Israel in a situation where the sea was in front of them, the Egyptians' fortress was on one side, the wilderness on the other side, and Pharaoh was coming up. Stop and think about this. They did not have a boat, and they did not have time to make one. They had no weapons. They were not trained militarily, and they knew

nothing about what to do. They were in a predicament and situation that, if they ever got out of it, would have to be by a miracle and the grace of God. It is just that simple: by a miracle and by the grace of God.

When you and I run across these hard and difficult truths of the Bible, we have to admit them, confess them, acknowledge them, and say, "They're there. I may not understand it at this particular point, but I believe it and I bow to it because it's in the Word of God."

Attitude Toward Hard Truths

Years ago, I was listening to the radio and listening to Lester Roloff on his Family Altar program. I do not know how many of you ever knew Lester Roloff, but I knew him personally and was in meetings with him. I loved to hear him preach and sing. He could not sing particularly well, and oftentimes, when he was preaching, right in the middle of his sermon he would break out singing. The power and hand of God were upon him so greatly that I would often sit there and just weep as he sang. I loved to hear him. I counted him as a friend and as a brother. He was a very unique individual.

As I was listening to him on the Family Altar program, he began reading from Ephesians chapter 1. I hope you understand what is in Ephesians chapter 1, covering the doctrine of election and predestination. I knew that Roloff was no theologian. He was a very practical man, but he was certainly not a theologian. I could not wait to find out what he was going to do with this passage from the Bible. He read the first fourteen verses, and when he finished reading them, he said, "I do not understand this doctrine. I cannot explain this doctrine.

Divine Providence

However, it is in the Scripture, and I bow to it. God will give me light when I need it. I thought to myself, “What a wonderful attitude.” That is exactly what our attitude should be toward anything that we do not understand at that particular time. We must simply bow to it in the present and wait for God to give us light.

You remember the Bible says in Mark 4 in verse 33, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.” Our Lord only teaches us as we are able to hear it. We have to understand that there are times when we are not able to hear certain truths. We can hear them and say, “I don’t believe that,” or “I don’t think that’s accurate.” Six months later, we think, “Wow, there it is.” We see it and understand it.

As you look at Exodus 14, understand that God chose Israel and rejected the Egyptians. God is absolutely sovereign. God has sovereignly brought Israel into this predicament. There is no escape. They cannot get out of it. There is nothing that they can do, not one thing.

Divine Providence: God's Sovereign Care

The Bible says in Romans 8 and verse 28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” God’s providence will always work things out which are best for us, for our good, and for His glory.

Sometimes we wonder why we are being persecuted, hated, despised, chased, and hounded. Certainly, the Israelites wondered that: “Why did we ever leave Egypt? Moses, didn’t we tell you this? Just let us alone. Let us serve them. It’s better to serve them than to die in this wilderness.” We wonder what in the world is coming to pass.

In Exodus 14:13, Moses said unto the people, “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.” Notice first that only God’s people see His salvation. Stop and think about that. Only God’s people see His salvation.

Here is the second truth: God’s salvation also includes the destruction of His enemies. What God was doing in this divine predicament was actually setting a trap and setting up His enemies for destruction. The Egyptians whom they had seen that day, they would see again no more for ever. God was showing His salvation to

His people while bringing destruction upon those who opposed them.

In Philippians 1:28, Paul says, “And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.” First of all, we have adversaries. It does not matter how vocal they are, how strong they are, or how powerful they are. Our Lord says that we are to be in nothing terrified by our adversaries.

Notice what else he says: “which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.” Just as our salvation is of God, so their perdition, or their destruction, or their condemnation, is of God as well. When our enemies are terrifying us, or trying to terrify us, it is a token of their perdition. They are attacking and assaulting the people of God. It is a token.

You remember especially those from the north: when you would ride a bus, you did not use money; you used tokens. You had to put that token in to get the ride. The token represented the money you had bought. God says that when they attack His people, that is a token, an evident token of their perdition, that they are on their way to destruction.

Now go back to Exodus chapter 14. You know the story, so I do not have to review it in detail. What God did was wash away all His enemies in one stroke. Israel never saw Pharaoh and his host again, except to see them dead. Here is my question: If God is going to destroy His enemies, how can we be absolutely sure that those enemies are going to be destroyed? And, by the way, God's enemies are our enemies. Notice the answer in verse 14: “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

I have always liked to paraphrase verse 14 in good South Georgia language: “Shut up and watch God.” When God fights, He wins. When God fights, His enemies lose. When God fights, the outcome is absolutely certain and sure. He says to Israel, “Just shut up, be quiet, be still, and watch God in His providence take care of this problem.”

Human Responsibility: Unquestioning Obedience

Two things are going to happen: He is going to deliver His people, and He is going to destroy His enemies. Now see our responsibility, your responsibility, in light of the providence of God. Look at verses 15 and 16: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.”

It does not matter whether you are an individual like Moses, a leader, or simply one of the multitudinous numbers of God's people. It does not matter whether you are the leader or just an individual. Your responsibility is to be obedient, unquestionably obedient.

Now look at what God said in verse 15: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me?” What are you crying about, Moses? Why do you keep asking? I have already told you that I am going to do this. “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” Moses, hold up your rod and divide the sea. Israel, march. Move. Go at My command.

What God is telling us, regardless of our position in life, is that we must be unquestionably obedient. In Zephaniah chapter 2 and verse 3, the Bible says, “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger.” In His divine providence, God says that our responsibility is to move and to do as He commands.

Divine Praise: God Glorified in Salvation and Condemnation

The fifth thing is this: there must be a divine praise. God said, “And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.”

"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen."

There is going to be praise in salvation, but there is also going to be praise in condemnation. It does not matter, in one sense, whether a group happens to be the enemies of God and God destroys them in His righteous judgment, or whether God gives another group grace, they repent and turn to Him, and in His mercy He saves them. One group is going to praise His justice, righteousness, and holiness, and the other group is going to praise His grace, mercy, and love.

Look, if you would, in verse 19: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night."

God's truth, God's Word, God's will, and God's way will always be light to His people. But God's truth, Word, will, and way will always be darkness to His enemies. That which gives light to one group gives darkness to the other group. The Bible speaks of those who do not know Jesus Christ as walking in darkness. Truth is oftentimes difficult to understand, but the truth God is giving us here is that God is going to be glorified not just in salvation but also in condemnation. Those who are condemned, like the Egyptians, are going to praise His righteousness, justice, and holiness. Those who

are delivered, like the Israelites, will praise His grace, mercy, and love.

Let me illustrate this. If you have ever gone fishing and stopped at a bait store for some worms, usually what they do in South Georgia is this: You say, "I want a box of those nightcrawlers or a box of those red wigglers." They take the cup or box, open it, and pour them out in front of you. All these worms are seething together and wiggling every which way. Then they pick them up and show you, "Yeah, they're alive and doing well." Once they drop them, they all go right back together.

Envision, then, fallen man as nothing but a mass of sin, wickedness, and rebellion. Here is a holy, righteous God, looking down on this seething mass of wicked humanity. The love of God says, "Save them all." The justice of God says, "Damn them all." Then the wisdom of God says, "Divide the lump. Let some praise Your justice and let some praise Your grace." You know, that is exactly what God did. Let me show you.

The Potter and the Clay: Romans 9

Romans chapter 9, beginning with verse 10, says: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Now stop there for a moment. Look what he says about Jacob and Esau in verse 11: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Before Jacob and Esau were born, God chose Jacob and rejected Esau. Jacob and Esau had absolutely nothing to do with it; their lives had nothing to do with it. It was the will of God. Now watch carefully. Watch the argument. Look in verse 14.

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" Was God unrighteous to choose Jacob and not Esau? Look at the

next phrase: "God forbid." The words literally mean, "Perish the thought." Do not even let it enter your mind. No. To whom does God owe salvation? Not one individual. The very fact that God saves any is His grace and His mercy. So Paul says, "Don't come here trying to tell me there's unrighteousness with God. I know better than that."

Watch how he explains it in verse 15: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God is not obligated to have mercy upon anyone. He is not obligated to have compassion upon anyone. He does, and I am thankful that He does. Here is the conclusion: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

If God happens to have compassion and mercy upon you, and you are saved, it is not because you used your will to achieve salvation, or used your will better than someone else. It is not because you ran well, worked well, or merited it. It is because God showed mercy to you. It is all of God; it is not of man. Verse 16 again: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Here is the illustration: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." In what way is God going to show His power in Pharaoh? His power to judge, condemn, and destroy, because Pharaoh is an enemy of God. Verse 18 gives the conclusion: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Verse 19: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" Here it is: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" You have no reason to talk or try to rebut God. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to

destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

So, what God says is, "Look, I'm the potter. I can make one vessel to honour, one vessel to dishonour, out of the same lump. I'm God. I can do as I please."

Notice the question: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Most of these men and women who were so resolute against God, who hated God and hated God's people, and who were the great enemies of God, usually had positions of power and money. He endured them with much longsuffering. He gave them what they wanted. Is there anything wrong with God giving someone what they want? The answer is no. They want sin, rebellion, and wickedness. So God says, "You can have it." It is just that simple. There is a divine praise even in condemnation.

The Song of Moses: Praise for Deliverance and Judgment

In Exodus chapter 14, beginning with verse 27: "And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."

Now we are talking about the complete destruction of Pharaoh and his armies. That is all chapter 14 is about, along with the deliverance of Israel. But chapter 15 is all about the praise and worship of God in this marvelous act. When God delivers His people, He always destroys His enemies.

SCRIPTURE READING - Exodus 15:1-14 (KJV)

> Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is

> become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.
>
> The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.
>
> All of this is about praising God for His great deliverance, which included the destruction of His enemies. Here is the truth: God will be glorified, and God will be praised not only in the deliverance of His people, but in the destruction of His enemies.
>
> All men were made for the honour of their Maker, and those whom He is not honoured by, He will get honour upon them. What did He say about Pharaoh? "I will get me honour upon Pharaoh and his armies."

Applications: Trusting God in Desperate Times

Revelation 19 shows the praise and worship at the destruction of the Lord's enemies: “And after these things I heard a great voice of much

people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

Proverbs 16:4 says, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." There are going to be some who praise the honour of His wrath and His justice, as well as some praising His grace and mercy.

Here is the second application. Israel was trapped: the sea in front of them, the wilderness and the fortresses on either side of them, and Pharaoh behind them. It looked as if they were about to be wiped out. Try to compare that situation with history, even with what is going on today, where there is the rise of anything and everything that is anti-God and anti-Christ, anti-Bible and anti-Christian. Whether it is the religion of political correctness, whether it is Islam, it does not matter what it is. Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ are so cornered that it looks as if we are about to be wiped out.

The point is this: Oftentimes, when it looks as if God's people are about to be overthrown and wiped out, God turns the tables, and it is the enemies of God and the enemies of God's people who are destroyed and wiped out. Just as God set up Pharaoh, He sets up His enemies, and they will fall like ripened plums into His hands. So, just because things look desperate and it looks as if the church is going to be destroyed, remember the words of our Lord: "The gates of hell shall not prevail."

All Men Will Know God

And they will not, because He is our foundation. Here is the third application: all men will know God either in salvation or condemnation. But they shall know Him. In Exodus 14:4, He said, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." And they did so. God said they were going to know that He is God.

You can read this phrase in the book of Ezekiel. I think it occurs about 70 times, and usually it is in the context of judgment, when God said, "And they shall know that I am the LORD." God is going to make sure even His enemies know that He is God. This is almost parallel to the passage in Philippians 2, beginning in verse 9, talking about Jesus Christ: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Once for sure, every man will confess and acknowledge the one true and living God, and that Jesus Christ is Lord. They should have loved Him and should have served Him. It may be too late, but even in their condemnation and destruction, they will acknowledge that God is God and Jesus Christ alone is salvation.

So all men will know God. They will know Him either in salvation or condemnation. Here is another awesome application to me. This is a horrifying, awesome fact and truth: the enemies of God will know and discover, in their condemnation and destruction, that God Himself is fighting against them. Imagine men who have fought all their lives against God, His truth, and His people. They think they have been somewhat successful, until God begins to bring destruction upon them and they realize that God is fighting against them.

"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen."

Can you imagine the absolute horror and terror in their hearts and minds when, all of a sudden, they realize, "Hey, this is it. God is fighting against us. We're doomed"? Not one of them escaped. Not one.

It is kind of like what they tell about Voltaire, the noted French infidel, who was dying and invited friends to come around and watch how an infidel died. The record says that he laid back and closed his eyes, seemingly peacefully dying. Then, all of a sudden, he sat straight up in the bed with a look of horror on his face and screamed, "There is a God!" and fell back dead. It has to be a horrifying experience to know that God is fighting against you.

Equally true is the fact that those who are saved will know and discover that their salvation is totally of God Himself. In Exodus 14:13–14, Moses said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." God was going to take care of this.

Exodus 14:30 says, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." Who saved them? The LORD saved them. We may confess and acknowledge now, like Jonah, "Salvation is of the LORD." We may say, "I know I cannot save myself. I know that I cannot help save myself. I know that salvation is of the LORD." But when we get in the presence of God only by His grace and mercy, we will know powerfully that it was God, and God alone, who saved us.

Just as horror and terror melted the hearts of His enemies when they realized that God was fighting against them, think of the grace, love, and mercy that will melt your heart when you see that it is God, and God alone, who has saved you. It may be a hard truth, but it is still truth. God will be honoured in salvation and in condemnation.

There is an election. There is a reprobation. Hard truth, but it is still truth.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and for Your truth. It may be flesh-withering, Lord, and men by nature may not like it, but it is still truth. We bow to Thee. We acknowledge it, confess it, believe it, and bow to it. Give us light and understanding, that we may rejoice in Thee and glorify Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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