**Exodus 14:19-31**

***19****Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them,****20****coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=exodus+14%3A19-31&version=ESV#fen-ESV-1910a)*]without one coming near the other all night.*

***21****Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.****22****And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.****23****The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.****24****And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic,****25****clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”*

***26****Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.”****27****So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lordthrewthe Egyptians into the midst of the sea.****28****The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.****29****But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

***30****Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.****31****Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.*

Deliverance is the overarching theme of Exodus

– deliverance from circumstances that threaten the faith of God’s people and their relationship with the Lord

* Deliverance from the consequences of sin.
* Deliverance from the evil of outside forces that overwhelmed them.
* Deliverance for pursuit of the fullness of life in God’s presence.

**Deliverance means being brought out from under the burden of difficult circumstances to stand upright and live freely.**

**Deliverance is the restoration of life and hope for the future.**

But Deliverance is no picnic.

It involves hard work, pain, and endurance.

No wonder *delivering* a baby involves labor!

Sometimes, deliverance comes precisely when we are caught between a rock and a hard place – or, in the case of God’s people Israel – between an impassably large body of water and an angry army of Egyptian solders.

After being spared death and nourished by meat and bread, God’s people now seem trapped and doomed.

God’s promise of a future seems to be impossible to fulfil.

I’ve had experiences like that – and probably you have, too.

* An accident that causes disability
* A diagnosis of terminal illness
* A friendship that you counted on falls apart
* You quit a good job in the hopes of a better one, but it doesn’t come through
* You buy a new house but cannot sell the old one.
* You want to impress someone, but the cost is your integrity and reputation.
* You have to choose between doing what is right and doing what others want you to do

In situations like this, we look one way and see peril and we look the other way and see certain death.

What are we to do?

If we were not God’s people, we might flip a coin to see whether to take our chances with the sea or the army.

Or we might dig a hole and hunker down and hope for the best.

But we are *God’s* people. And that means we trust God to make a way for us out of the tight spots in life.

So many of the Psalms have to do with tight spots.

 Ps. 25: My problems go from bad to worse.
    Oh, save me from them all!
**19**See how many enemies I have
    **20**Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
    Do not let me be disgraced, for in you I take refuge.

Ps. 69

Save me, O God,
    for the floodwaters are up to my neck.
**2**Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire;
    I can’t find a foothold.
I am in deep water,
    and the floods overwhelm me.

Ps. 88

…my life is full of troubles,
    and death draws near.

I am in a trap with no way of escape.

**Tight spots are to be expected, but they pose no problem for the Lord God.**

See what he did for the people he was delivering from Egypt?

The presence of God was positioned between his people and their enemies.

Then God made a way for them to move into the future by parting the sea.

 God removed the barrier to their deliverance.

 And he dealt with their enemies nipping at their tails.

The Exodus is a story of God’s faithfulness to us especially in the tight spots in our lives.

* + When we find ourselves becoming anxious and uncertain which way to turn.
	+ When it feels like the circumstances of life are overwhelming;
	+ When we must make a decision and there seems to be no good choice;

 In tight spots, it is important that we cry to the Lord for help.

 It is important that we trust the faithfulness of God:

* + who parted the sea for the Israelites,
	+ Who cleansed lepers and made the blind to see
	+ Who cast out demons and made the lame to walk.
* God the Father who raised his Son Jesus from the dead –

**This God is able to make a way for us out of the tight spots of life.**

* He is able to part the waters for us – and able to open up new possibilities.
* God is able to overturn bad circumstances and use them for good.
* Our Lord is able to put himself between us and our enemies and to lead us forward into life.

Not only is God able to deliver us, God is willing.

 **And even more than willing,**

**God has already done this very thing for us.**

In ancient times, God led his people by a pillar of cloud and fire.

 But in our day, God leads us by Jesus on the cross.

In ancient times, God protected his people and pushed them from behind into the future.

 Did you catch that? The angel of the Lord and the pillar moved from the head of the line to the rear –

 Usually, we follow the banner out in front – but sometimes, we need direction from behind.

 Sometimes, we need to be pushed in the right direction.

We can easily see Jesus out in front of us – calling us to come with him.

But God knows we also need to be able to look back behind us and see God there, too –

 **God between us and the past – reminding us that the past does not set the direction for the future;**

**And turning us back around to face the future God desires for us.**

So remember this – our tight spots are no problem for God.

God delivers us from that place of paralysis between the rock and the hard place by making a way for us that had not been there before.

And God neutralizes our enemies so that they pose no threat to us.

**It is *faith* that grasps this truth in the midst of fear and anxiety so that we might see the way of God.**

 The way made sure by Jesus himself.

In 1530, after the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, Martin Luther wrote a letter to his friend Philip Melanchthon in which he deals with a tight spot in Philip’s life:

*Dear Philip, You are torturing yourself over*

*[something difficult] because you cannot comprehend it ;*

*For God has placed it in a spot which is not to be*

*found in your [wisdom or knowledge]. This spot is*

*called faith, and includes everything one does not see or under-*

*stand, and whoever tries to understand all this receives*

*tribulation and tears as his reward, as you know.*

*Had Moses waited till he understood how Israel could*

*elude Pharaoh's armies, they might have been in Egypt*

*still.*

*May God so increase your faith that the devil and*

*the whole world may be powerless against you. Let us*

*comfort ourselves with the faith of others if we have none*

*ourselves. .. If we have not God's Word, who then has it ?*

*I pray without ceasing that Christ may*

*be with you. Amen !*

Faith trusts God to make a way through the tight spots of life so that we may delight in living the life Jesus died and rose to give us.

It is Jesus – risen from the dead – who gives us hope, so that even when we cannot see our protection from the rear or the way forward in front, we continue putting one foot in front of the other.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen