

Exodus 14

Why God Allows Difficulty

On Tuesday, July 6, 2004, The New York Post headlined a story that no other news service or newspaper even reported. It said, "Kerry's Choice: Dem picks Gephardt as VP candidate." The article started, "Exclusive: John Kerry's running mate will be veteran US Representative, Richard Gephardt of Missouri, the Post has learned."

Goes to show once again, you shouldn't believe everything you read. Of course, some people want to treat the Bible like that. They read about people and events in the Bible, but they say, "Wait a minute. That doesn't sound right. I don't believe that part."

Like the nine year old boy was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday School that day. He said, "Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind the enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge, and all the people walked across safely. Then he used his GPS positioner to contact headquarters and call in laser guided bombs. They sent stealth bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved."

His mother says, "Now, Joey, is that REALLY what your teacher taught you?" Little Joey said, "Well, no, Mom, but if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

You know what I see over and over? People put themselves as the authority over the Bible instead of letting the Bible be the authority over them. In other words, they say, "Oh I can believe that part, but I can't believe this other part." Or, "I like this saying of Jesus, but I ignore the ones I don't like."

But even just a casual reader of the Bible would have to admit that the Bible is an integrated whole. It isn't just a piecemeal compilation of a bunch of ancient writings.

It isn't like an anthology of Jewish religious ideas. One of the marks of Divine inspiration is the unity of the Scriptures.

Arthur W Pink has a book called *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*. In it he says: The

manner in which the Bible has been produced argues against its unity. The Bible was penned on two continents, written in three languages, and its composition and compilation extended through the slow progress of sixteen centuries. The various parts of the Bible were written at different times and under the most varying circumstances. Parts of it were written in tents, deserts, cities, palaces and dungeons; in times of danger and in seasons of joy.

Among its writers were judges, kings, priests, prophets, patriarchs, prime ministers, herdsmen, scribes, soldiers, physicians and fishermen. Yet despite these varying circumstances, conditions and workmen, the Bible is one Book, behind its many parts there is an unmistakable organic unity. It contains one system of doctrine, one code of ethics, one plan of salvation and one rule of faith.

There's a whole host of reasons why we believe that the Bible writers wrote under the inspiration of God. The unity of the Bible is just one of them.

The Bible is a "take it or leave it book." If you're going to be honest with it, the Bible has to be true or false, there's no in between. It claims all through it that it comes from God. Either it does or it doesn't.

When I look at the unity, the scientific accuracy, the historical accuracy, the 100% prophetic accuracy, and the way it changes lives, I come to the conclusion that I can trust the Bible.

Our passage were studying today is one of those sections that some people have tried to explain away. We're going to look at Exodus 14 and the parting of the red sea.

Video Clip 1923 10 Commandments: Red Sea

Turn to Exodus 14 Page 62

While your turning there let me just fill in a little background. The Hebrew people have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. That's about 6 generations that have gone by.

Do you ever feel like you're on a treadmill that never stops? Sometimes it's going fast and sometimes it's going slow, but it never stops. You just keep on with the same routine day after day?

Now imagine what it was like for a Hebrew enslaved in Egypt. Your parents were slaves and their parents before them and their parents before them. You cling to your faith in God but you'd have to admit it's pretty weak.

Then a guy named Moses shows up with a message from God. "We're outa here."

That's what happened. Only the Pharaoh wasn't about to let his free labor force leave. So God brought a series of 10 destructive plagues on the Egyptians.

The last one was the death of the firstborn of every Egyptian household including Pharaoh's. That was it. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. Finally the Egyptians gave the Hebrew slaves their freedom.

Life was good (temporarily) until everything radically changed.

As we work our way through this chapter we're going to see three truths about rough times in life.

I. Tough Times Do Not Mean That God Has Turned His Back On You

Read 14:1-4

God told the Israelites to "turn," that is, to go back the way they came. I'm sure they thought that was crazy. Why in the world would they possibly retrace their steps backwards? Instead of fleeing from Pharaoh, it looked like they were making it easy for him to catch up with them. The course which they were about to take would be one that would place them in a very dangerous position.

Through Moses, God ordered a change of direction which must have seemed strange and risky. Their course was to turn in a southwesterly direction which in a short time would place great bodies of water between them and the Sinai peninsula to the east.

It didn't take a military genius to figure out that what the Israelites were doing was putting themselves in a very vulnerable position, trapped, between natural barriers.

If Pharaoh was going to come after them, they'd be in a heap of trouble.

Now listen, God explained through Moses that this whole change of direction was

intended to encourage Pharaoh to follow their trail. God said, “ Pharaoh’s going to think you guys are lost. He’s going to figure you got disoriented in the desert. ‘Bewildered by the land.’”

Read verses 5-9

Why is it that as soon as we run into trouble we really do get disoriented? We tend to become bewildered. Not by the land but by the problems.

And we all do it to one degree or another, don’t we? I have people all the time saying, “Why is God punishing me?” or “Life’s not fair.” or “I’m angry at God for allowing me to suffer.”

Somehow we’ve got it in our minds that if we’re faithful and obedient to God everything should be smooth in our lives.

We don’t really want God’s plan if that plan involves obstacles. Peace and comfort are high priorities for us. And when life doesn’t go our way, or people seem to frustrate our plans we get confused.

Suddenly God must have gotten real mad at us, or maybe He just got so busy with all the other stuff that’s going on in the world that He’s forgotten about us. We’ve just kinda slipped through the cracks.

Listen, the God of Scripture is a whole lot bigger than that. God’s plans and purposes for our lives are a whole lot more complex than that.

God didn’t turn His back on Israel and God doesn’t turn His back on you. He loves you. He doesn’t always love what you do, but He loves you with an immeasurable, never ending, passion.

How do I know that? The Bible tells me so.

1Jo 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

1Jo 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the satisfaction for our sins.

1Jo 3:1 *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

In the most costly act of love in all of human history, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to die on a cross for our sins.

God the Father actually sacrificed His Son for the wrongs we have done.

That is love. God loves you. Whether you even realize it or not. Whether you even believe it or not. God loves you.

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

In fact the Bible says, *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

God knows you and loves you individually. So what about these problems? *Tough Times Don't Mean That God Has Turned His Back On You.* He wasn't punishing Israel for something they had done. He wasn't judging them, He was saving them.

It's just that His ways get a little confusing when we don't live our lives by faith.

Just like this situation with the Hebrews God is often up to big things if we'll just trust Him.

I. *Tough Times Don't Mean That God Has Turned His Back On You*

II. *We Choose The Attitude We Have During Difficult Times*

Read vs 10-12

Here are people who have lived through the past few months with each of the 10 plagues. They saw the power of God. They knew what happened to the Egyptians. They knew the promises God had made to their ancestors. But all of a sudden, none of that mattered.

All of a sudden all they could see was Pharaoh's army bearing down on them. All they knew was they were trapped.

The Hebrews were afraid because they had their eyes on the Egyptians and not on

God. Fear caused them to distort the truth, to be ruled by doubt rather than by faith.

That statement that it would have been better for them to have served the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness exhibits a remarkably short memory.

But then don't we sometimes act as if we regret having stepped out in faith when we see what is involved?

Israel trusted God for their deliverance but not for their circumstances.

If we are Christians, if we've trusted Jesus Christ to save us from judgment why do we struggle with trusting God with our circumstances.

It's like, "OK God. I believe you forgive my sins. I believe Jesus died on a cross for me. I have all confidence that He rose from the dead three days later. I believe that you have a home in heaven for me. But, oh by the way, I can't trust you to supply a hamburger for me today."

"I can't trust you to help me through a tough marriage. I can't put my kids in Your hands. I can't seem to believe that you'll take care of me now that I've lost my job. I have no confidence that You'll be with me through this illness."

God all I see is the big problem, the tough times, the heartache. I can rely on you for eternity but I'm blown away by the right now!

How does Moses handle this? **read vs 13-14**

Rick Labate writes, *In verses 13 and 14 we have the two most important verses of this whole story. With the Israelites staring the Red Sea in the face, Moses stands up and proclaims in a loud voice, "All right, everybody grab a pail and start baling!"*

That's not what he says. He says, "Stop moving all around. Hold your peace."

And Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." In other words, "Don't panic. Don't run around pulling your hair out. Take a stand and rest in God's deliverance.

Picture in your mind someone whose pacing back and forth. Someone whose

jittery, and agitated. They can't sit still for a minute. They're moving all around cause their nervous.

Now multiply that by over 1,000,000. Moses is in the middle of all these jumpy, edgy people. What a scene that must have been. Boarding on complete chaos.

But in the middle of that confusion Moses jumps up and tells the people be still and watch what God can do for them.

"Stop biting your fingernails and whimpering. Those Egyptians who are bothering you will never disturb you again after today."

Moses has come a long way hasn't he? He's gone from hot head to great leader. Moses was calm because he had faith in God in spite of his experience.

Everyone else was blinded by the circumstance and they couldn't see God. Moses refused to look at his circumstances because he didn't want his trust in God to be diminished.

He hadn't learned it overnight. You don't learn what it means to trust God sitting here on a Sunday morning. Reading a book might inspire you but there's only one way to learn to put God at the center of everything, by experience.

Today God wants you to have faith in Him and in His power in spite of the circumstances you find yourself in. In spite of the fact that you don't know how you're going to make the car payment, or even the mortgage payment this month. inspire of the fact that you just had to break your engagement off. In spite of the fact that you didn't get accepted to that university you wanted to attend.

You say, "Ed those are some pretty tough problems. I'm up a against a rough situation."

Just remember, these Hebrews were in this dilemma because that's exactly where God wanted them to be.

They had plenty of lessons to learn about faith and trust and God wanted to display His power so He'd get the glory and worship when everything was said and done.

Now, I'd be the last to try and explain all the intricacies of God's sovereignty and our free will. I can't always separate things that God allows from the things that God specifically causes. There are so many factors including our own stupidity and rebellion that you have to factor in.

I can't always separate it all but I do know this: ultimately, when the smoke clears we know that God is the Lord. We know that there's the over arching sovereignty of God that directs our path.

For these Hebrews it was God who put them right in the middle of where they were. God had a whole boatload of things He wanted to teach them and this was the only way they'd learn.

We choose the attitude we have during the tough times. Moses says, "Stop being afraid and hold you peace."

The people were hemmed in by the sea on the east, mountains and desert on the south and west, and the chariots of the most elite, powerful army in the world were rumbling off to the north. The sound was getting closer and closer. The dust clouds were growing on the horizon.

How could they "Stop being afraid and hold their peace?" By believing that the same God who brought them out of Egypt would fight for them. Every time were in the hotseat. When it's all coming down on us, we have a choice about how were going to respond. We can go with how we feel, or we can go with faith in what we know about our God.

- I. *Tough Times Don't Mean That God Has Turned His Back On You*
- II. *We Choose The Attitude We Have During Difficult Times*
- III. *Never Underestimate The Power And Wisdom Of Almighty God*

The NT speaks about Israel's problems in leaving Egypt and it says, *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

Listen. This ought to rock your world. God knew full well the complexities of life that we would face in the 21st century and He gave us an example of how to have a right attitude even in the face of insurmountable problems.

Read vs 15-31

I believe that God delights in placing us in situations where we can't do anything but trust Him to take us through. Where we have to say, "That's it! I give up. I'm at the end of all my resources."

You Know what happens when we let go of our control and let God take over? God's glory and the greatness of His awesome power are put on display for all to see.

In those kind of situations we become a unique vehicle for displaying the glory of God. Wow! What a privilege.

It may not be as spectacular as the splitting of the Red Sea, but when our mouth praises God in the midst of our trouble God's power and strength are displayed.

A cynical, disbelieving world can argue with a lot of things, but they can't argue with a life that's been transformed and empowered by the living God.

Even when we stumble a little bit in this whole thing, but we admit our weakness and praise God, people are impacted. There's so many people out there just bumping through life with no spiritual moorings. They're looking for reality.

Maybe they've been burned by some legalistic church who just condemned them. Kicked them when they were down. Or, maybe they've been let down by some wishy washy church that uses a few Christian terms but has no idea about the reality of the living God. We've got way too many of those today.

Whatever, I'll guarantee you people are watching you. If you go to this church. If you claim to have trusted Jesus Christ as your Personal Savior, people are watching.

And what they want to see is how you face the tough times. God wants to glorify Himself through you.

So here's God promising a solution to Israel. He didn't claim it made sense to human reasoning. God didn't want it to make sense from human reasoning. If it did then everyone would say, "Whew, I'm sure glad that worked out" instead of "Don't we worship an awesome God."

So God says, "Moses wave your old walking stick in the air." He did and God split the Red Sea.

You know, it's interesting, some people have doubted that the Exodus ever took place. They try to rob God of His glory.

This is a quote from Merrill F. Unger, PhD Johns Hopkins. *"It is practically impossible, with any show of reason, to deny either the historicity of Moses or the fact of the exodus. As scholars generally concede, an event which so impressed itself so indelibly on the conscience of a people as to control all its later thinking, to be the foundation of its national history, and to ratify its religion, could by no stretch of the imagination have been an invention."*

Never Underestimate The Power And Wisdom Of God.

God brought the people of Israel into a seemingly impossible situation so that He might show His glory to them personally and to us through the Scriptures.

No matter how hopeless a situation may seem, we may be on the threshold of one of God's incredible displays of His wisdom and power. We may not see the waters part, but we may see lives transformed, circumstances changed, and opportunities provided that would have never happened if we hadn't trusted, waited, and watched.

What difficulty are you in today that's bigger than God?

Even the hopelessness of our sinful condition wasn't bigger than God. Satan was a fallen angel that called the character of God into question. God pronounced judgment on Lucifer for his rebellion.

Satan's accusation was that God may be holy but He sure wasn't love. God silenced that accusation once for all. He solved the dilemma of how He could be holy and loving at the same time.

God created Adam and warned him not to eat from one tree in the garden. Adam chose to revolt. He ate from that tree and we've been following in his footsteps ever since.

He disobeyed God. We disobey God. That disobedience is called sin.

God is holy so He declares that sin must be punished. So far that was Satan's accusation. Holiness and judgment without love.

Then God did something truly astonishing. He robed Himself in human flesh and became one of His creation. But He didn't stop there. As if that wasn't enough He willingly let sinful human beings nail Him to a cross. And on that cross He bore the judgment for mankind's sin.

Suddenly the absolutely holy and righteous God, announced His loving character to the universe and all creation. He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Talk about an insurmountable problem. It wouldn't matter how hard we tried and for how long. We could never live up to perfection. That's God's standard.

God stepped in and made the way for us to be part of His family. *...the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Satan was wrong. God isn't just a God of judgment. He's also a God of salvation. He's both.

the Hebrews were delivered and the Egyptians were judged. Everyone had a choice. Everyone had their opportunity. Some lived and some died.

You have a choice today. The Bible says: *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...*

Don't believe everything you read. Some things are just outright falsehoods. Gephardt didn't make it. Be a healthy skeptic. Rely on the truth. The truth is found in a book that has stood the test of time because it's God's book. It'll see you through this life and it'll see you through the life to come.