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SERMON TITLE

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Exodus 14

SYNOPSIS

Whatever trouble we may face, God is with us and has a plan.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ **Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

Leading up to this chapter, the Israelis have been living in Egypt for 430 years and serving as slaves to Pharaoh. God had instructed Moses to lead them out of Egypt, but Pharaoh was unwilling to let them go. So, God brought 10 plagues upon Egypt and finally, Pharaoh relented. However, it wasn't long until Pharaoh changed his mind and went after them. We pick up with the Israelis shortly before the famed crossing of the Red Sea...

v. 2 tell the Israelites to turn back

This was God's idea. On the surface, this seemed like back-tracking. It wasn't that the Israelis had done something wrong or had gone too far. It was simply God's leading. When you are following God, it doesn't matter what it looks like, just keep on following.

Between Migdol and the sea = tower; a fortified city on the Egyptian border

Directly opposite of Baal-zephon = the destroyer; Typhon, the evil demon of Egypt

God was placing the Israelis in an impossible position. They were sandwiched between a fortified tower of the enemy and the sea. There were also mountains which would be very difficult to pass. And, they were within sight of the demon god of Egypt. Plus, the Egyptian army was catching up to them. This was not the place anyone would naturally choose to be. There was danger at every turn; they were facing overwhelming odds; this was the ultimate "**between a rock and a hard place.**" But it was all God's idea.

There are times we face difficult situations in life. Times when everything is overwhelming and there seems to be no way out. Those times are not always from the enemy. They can be. And they can be because of poor choices we've made. But, even when you've been diligently following the Lord, resisting the enemy, and making wise choices, you may still find yourself in a troubling situation. Could it be that God placed you there? Why would he do that?

Well, in this case, he was going to demonstrate his power to all of Israel as well as all of Egypt. **v.4 – then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.** This situation would end with God being glorified. As well, it would end with the Israelis putting their trust in God and in Moses. v. 31.

☞ **God is not nearly as concerned about your comfort as he is about your completion.**

James 1:2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Another part of God's plan was to confuse the enemy. **v. 3 Pharaoh will think you're confused...** God was setting an ambush for Pharaoh. We see this more fully in verses 24-25. He threw the army into confusion and made their chariot wheels come off. By putting the Israelis in this impossible situation, God was setting the enemy up for destruction.



Psalms 55:9 CEV

Confuse my enemies, Lord! Upset their plans.

☞ That's what God famously does. **Just when the enemy thinks he has the upper hand, God turns the tables on him.** Just when the Philistines had Samson weakened and enslaved as their entertainment, the hair on his head began to grow again. Just when the enemy thought he killed Jesus, winning a great victory, God raised him from the dead. Just when the enemy thinks you are down and defeated, by God's grace and power, you persevere and keep on keeping on. God confuses the enemy.

We sometimes think that Satan will leave us alone or forget about us. Yet, just like Pharaoh went after Israel, Satan pursues us, attempting to keep us under his control. But, God is planning for our deliverance all the while. And, he is setting the enemy up for destruction at the same time.

☞ **If you've been struggling with sinful tendencies and trying to break free, don't give up.** It may seem that those things just keep on cropping up, but God is with you. He wants to deliver you. It may seem overwhelming, but you're in good company...

v. 10-12 They were very terrified: It made sense for Israel to be afraid. They could see Pharaoh's armies on one side and the Red Sea on the other. Not to mention the mountains and ☞ the demon god of Baal-zephon. Their fear and their cry to the LORD made sense. **Fear comes naturally, but it must be tempered by faith.**

☞ **FEAR = False Evidence Appearing Real.** Now, in this case, there really was an enemy and there really were boundaries all around. But the false evidence was that they thought they would die here. It sure seemed inevitable, but God had other plans. It may be that your situation is genuinely threatening. It may be that those temptations are really testing you. But that doesn't mean that you will lose. God is with you.

v. 10 They cried out to the LORD. Israel did the right thing. When we find ourselves in dangerous places with no easy escape, we must cry out to God, because God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

v. 13 Do not be afraid: At this point, there's no evidence that Moses had any idea how God would help them in the situation. All he knew was God *would* help. In a sense, Moses knew he was in such a bad situation that God *had* to come through.

Vance Havner related the story of an elderly lady who was greatly disturbed by her many troubles both real and imaginary. Finally, she was told in a kindly way by her family, "Grandma, we've done all we can do for you. You'll just have to trust God for the rest." A look of utter despair spread over her face as she replied, "Oh, dear, has it come to that?" Havner commented, "It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that!"

☞ **When we see that our only help is God, we are more likely to trust Him.**



v. 13 Stand firm. *This is often the LORD's direction to the believer in a time of crisis. Despair will cast you down, keeping you from standing. Fear will tell you to retreat. Impatience will tell you to do something now. Presumption will tell you to jump in before the right time. Yet, God often tells us to simply **stand still** as He reveals His plan.*

Ephesians 6:14-18

14 **Stand firm** then, with the belt of **truth** buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of **righteousness** in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of **peace**. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of **faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of **salvation** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And **pray in the Spirit** on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

So, you are in a troubling situation, with little hope of escape. Are you saved? Then you've got the helmet of salvation. Are you living right? Then you've got the breastplate of righteousness. If the answer to either of those questions is no, then that's what you need to correct. Get saved.

☞ Get right with God. But, if those things are settled, then **in order to stand firm, you have to hold on to the truth, keep the faith, find your peace in Christ, and pray!**

v. 13 See the deliverance of the LORD: Moses didn't know what God would do. Yet he knew that God would save His people. He could say, "**the LORD will fight for you.**"

v. 15 always amuses me. **Why do you cry to Me; tell the Israelites to move on.** Moses had just told them to stand firm. Now God is saying, "get going." How do we reconcile this? I think it's a little bit of Moses showing confidence to the people, but still being unsure of exactly what God was going to do. I also think it relates to faith and action. **James 2:17 says, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." Once you are able to really trust God (have faith), then ☞ you will be able to carry on and move forward. Faith always leads to action.**

During the terrible days of WW2, a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as quickly as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow. Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "I can't see you!" The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, "But I can see you. Jump!" The boy jumped, because he trusted his father. The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen.

Perhaps you've been stuck in a hard situation. You've cried out to God; you've kept the faith. Maybe it's time to step out in faith and trust God to catch you.

v. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand. The staff was what Moses was accustomed to. He used it when he was taking care of sheep for his father-in-law, Jethro. It was a symbol of his authority and his ability. It all started at the burning bush when Moses was feeling ill-equipped



for God's calling. God asked him, "What's that in your hand?" He started right where Moses was, with what Moses knew and used that to fulfill his plan.

It's the same today. God will take whatever you have and multiply it for his purposes. God used David and a sling to kill a giant. God used a little boy with 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed a large crowd. **Whatever ability you have, give it to God, and he will do amazing things with it. So, step out in faith with what you can do and trust God for the rest.**

Romans 12:1
offer your bodies as living sacrifices...

1 Peter 4:10
Each one should use **whatever gift** he has received to serve others...

My question to you is: What has God put in your hand? Do you wonder how God might use you? See what He has given you. God equips people in various ways. You might say, "I like to have people over to my home." Another might respond, "I'm good with my hands. I can help a group get things done. I like to cook. I have the gift of gab. I like to keep things tidy." And so on. Offer to God in faith what He has given you, no matter how simple, and God will use it — sometimes supernaturally — to do His work. You'll have a new sense of meaning, since you'll begin to realize how God is using simple things in new and wonderful ways.

v. 19-20 The Angel of God and the pillar of cloud stood between Israel and the Egyptian army. God protected them while a way was being made. We also see this truth in the placement of Israel. We've already seen that they were stuck between a rock and a hard place, with nowhere to turn. But they were at Pi-hahiroth which means the mouth; a place with green grass. This was likely a delta of a waterway, which was rich in vegetation. So, while the Israelis were stuck, God was still providing and protecting them. God never leaves you alone either. **He is always with you**, taking care of you, sometimes behind the scenes. *We often have little idea how much God does to protect us from the attacks of our unseen enemies.*

It was light on Israel's side and dark on Egypt's side. This is the way the power of God is seen by various people. *Warren Wiersbe... The workings of the Lord are darkness to the world, but light to God's people.* This is what we are seeing in our world today. God's ways are perceived by many as antiquated, restrictive, and negative. But to believers who trust him, God's ways are right and beneficial.

v. 21 all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong wind. It wasn't Moses or his "magic" wand that did it. It was God! For Moses, he sent the wind. For us, he sent the Holy Spirit. You need the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. God still does miracles today and, he loves to partner with people to do them. *There may be many miracles yet to be done because no person has stepped up to be the one who will stretch out their hand.* Could it be that we don't see many miracles because you or someone else is not reaching out in faith to be part of the miracle? Partner with God and see his miracles at work.



v. 22 the Israelis walked through the waters. God made a way through an impossible situation, and he can do the same for you.

v. 31 The people feared the LORD, and trusted the LORD and His servant Moses: This was just the result God intended. **When we trust God in all circumstances, he builds our faith.** And, as our faith grows, we see more and more of God's works. Here, it all started with a setback, which was actually God-ordained. Then, there was an impossible, threatening situation, with trouble all around. But God made a way where there was no way. And, can you imagine the stories those people could tell their kids and grandkids! All because they were there when God did a miracle of deliverance. That's a story of faith!

☞ FAITH = Fantastic Adventures In Trusting Him

I want to walk in faith, too. I want to be able to tell stories of my experiences of God's miraculous powers as well. How about you? We might be between a rock and a hard place, but perhaps God is setting up a miraculous deliverance which will destroy the enemy.

Will you be firm in your faith? Will you step out and trust God to see you through? God is making a way. He is planning your deliverance. Partner with him to see a miracle.