



“He Will Protect”

Exodus 13 & 14

Idea: God fights for His people.

Intro: Do you know the name “Speedy Morris?” If you know the name, you may know he was a high school basketball coach in Philadelphia for several years before becoming the head coach at LaSalle University. He turned that program around, taking his team to the NCAA tournament four times. In fact his ’89-’90 team finished the season with a 30-2 record and nationally ranked for the first time.

One morning Speedy was up in the bathroom shaving, and his wife hollered up and said, “Honey, Sports Illustrated is on the phone.” Well, he got so excited he cut himself. So he reached over and tore off a piece of toilet paper to put on the cut. As he doctored himself he was ecstatic that Sports Illustrated was calling him. He was thinking, “I can’t believe this. Here I’ve turned this program around...maybe they’re going to put me on the cover of Sports Illustrated. They’re going to write up a big article on me. My career is about to take off.”

He bolted out of the bathroom and headed down the steps, taking two at a time. Half way down, he fell and tumbled to the bottom. Then he got up on his knees and in pain crawled over to the phone. When Speedy picked it up he said, "Sports Illustrated!" And a voice on the other end said, "Yes, and for 75 cents an issue, you can have a year's supply."

Have you ever been disappointed like that? Have you ever thought something big was about to happen and it was a colossal disappointment?

Inquiry: God's people are having a moment like that themselves in Exodus 14. They have just left Egypt. God devastated Pharaoh and his people through ten plagues. The final plague resulted with Pharaoh in essence tapping out. He told Moses and Aaron to take their people, flocks, and herds and get out (Exodus 12:32). The battle was over. God had given them the victory. In fact the victory was so sweet, the Egyptians gave the Jews whatever they wanted as they left Egypt (12:36).

While the Lord led Israel to the banks of the Red Sea, He simultaneously hardened Pharaoh's heart. He incited and drew him out into the wilderness. Pharaoh was determined to capture the Jews and enslave them once again. This brings us to Exodus 14:10. One afternoon as the people of Israel were still celebrating their victory over Egypt, as they were still singing the victory songs, they looked up and saw in the horizon an army marching on them.

Read Exodus 14:10-31.

Today, we are in week 3 of a four-week sermon series we have entitled, "He Will." It is a study on trust, looking at some of the great miracle stories in the Bible. No matter what is going on in your life and family, through this series, you will learn that God can always be trusted. He will empower, provide, protect, and be present in your life. We must trust.

The experience of Moses and the people of Israel teach us that our God is not passive. He never idly watches from afar. No, the Bible declares that He is near (Ps 34:18). He is an ever-present help in time of trouble (Ps 46:1). God fights for His people. We see here that He will protect.

Before looking at the part of the passage where God protects His people, we need to understand how they got boxed in on the banks of the Red Sea. There are some faith principles we need to understand and learn.

Faith Principles:

- God's way is the best way. (Ex 13:17-18)

We often think that the shortest route is the best route, but that is not always the case. The shortest route can actually be the worst route. Rather than leading Israel on the northern road that would take them through the land of the Philistines, He led them to the southeast. He did this because the shortest route would have been too difficult for their weak faith. They needed to learn to trust Him one day at a time.

Appl: This is also true for us today. God liberates us and then leads us through the varied experiences of life, a day at a time, so that we might get to know Him better and claim by faith all that He wants us to have. At the same time, we come to know ourselves better. We discover our strengths and weaknesses, and we grow in understanding of God's will and trusting His promises.

Our God is good, and He plans the best way for you to take in life. It may take longer and have a few more hills and valleys than you prefer, but you can always know that it is for your good. If you permit the Lord to direct your steps, expect to be led occasionally on paths that may seem unnecessarily long and difficult.

- God's way ensures God's presence. (Ex 13:21-22)

A pillar of cloud guided the nation of Israel during the day, which turned into a pillar of fire at night. The pillar represented the presence of God in their midst. God occasionally spoke from the pillar of cloud (Num 12:5-6; Deut 31:15-16; Ps 99:7). The pillar also shielded the people from the hot sun as they journeyed by day (Ps 105:39). It also protected them from their enemies (Ex 14:20). What was light for Israel became darkness for the Egyptians.

Appl: God guides us today too. He may not manifest His presence in the form of a pillar, but we do have His Word. God speaks today as clearly as He did back then. And when we hear His Word and follow it, we can be sure that His presence follows.

- God's way is often not the easiest way. (Ex 14:1-4)

God led Israel out into the wilderness to the edge of the Red Sea. Their path convinced Pharaoh that Israel was wondering around like lost sheep. He figured they would be easy to capture and re-enslave. God boxed Israel in at the edge of the sea. He used them as bait in His trap for Pharaoh.

Appl: We must remember that God created you and me for the sake of His glory. And He often times will lead you down difficult paths so that He might show His power in your life and receive glory. God did this in Job's life. He does it here in Israel. And He does it in your life too. God's way is often not the easiest, but it is the best way. And it is the way of His presence.

Illust: Titus Grigg's battle with terminal brain cancer.

Moses and Israel were presented with an opportunity to trust the Lord. They were given a front row seat to watch God's

protection of them. They looked up from the beach and saw Pharaoh heading their way. How were they going to respond? How was God going to respond? There are three things about these responses we need to learn and understand today.

1. The natural response of the flesh is to fear.

Read Exodus 14:10-12.

What did Israel fix their eyes? It wasn't the Lord.

As long as the Israelites kept their eyes on the fiery pillar and followed the Lord, they were walking by faith and no enemy could touch them. But when they took their eyes off the Lord and looked back and saw the Egyptians getting nearer, they became frightened and began to complain.

These verses introduce the disappointing pattern of Israel's behavior during their journey from Egypt to Canaan. When things were fine and easy, they typically obeyed the Lord and Moses. But if there was any trial or discomfort in their circumstances, they immediately began to complain and sought to return to Egypt.

It is amazing how quickly they would forget the promises of God when difficulty struck. They would immediately begin to imagine the worst possible scenarios. This is what a lack of trust in God does to us. It has a way of erasing from our memory all the demonstrations we have seen of God's great power and all the instances we know of His faithfulness to His Word. Faith is replaced with fear, and fear is the natural response of the flesh.

2. The spiritual response of faith is to trust.

Read Exodus 14:13-14.

Moses was a man of faith. He knew Pharaoh was no match for God. He remembered how God had led Israel victoriously out of bondage just a few days before this. He commanded the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see.” God was going to fight for them. He was going to protect them. They only had to be silent and watch.

It takes faith to be silent in the midst of the storm.

Illust: The gospels tell us that Jesus was quiet before His accusers while on trial. John tells us that when Pilate was questioning Jesus, He was silent. He never spoke up for Himself. He didn’t argue His case in an attempt to escape the cross. He didn’t try to fix the situation. No, He had complete trust in His Father even though the path would result in His suffering and execution (John 19:10-11).

Moses told the people to not fear but instead to have faith...to trust in God’s protection. He understood they could not trust God and at the same time fear their circumstances. Faith and fear cannot live together in the same heart, for one will destroy the other.

3. The divine response of God to faith is to protect.

Read Exodus 14:30.

Faith is the expression of a transformed heart. God has always and simply asked men and women to believe Him...to trust His Word. Simple belief was what was required of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Adam was asked to trust God and what He said about life and the forbidden tree. Noah was asked to believe about the flood. Abraham was asked to believe about his blessing. And Israel was asked to believe in God’s protection in the face of Pharaoh.

Israel did as Moses directed them. They faithed into God. They trusted in His Word spoken by Moses. And their trust in God resulted in His protection over their lives.

Appl: There are times in our lives today that feel a lot like the scene in Exodus 14. We are journeying with God. We are following His leadership and calling. As we follow His leading, rejoicing in God's provision, we all of sudden find ourselves on the shore of the Red Sea and Pharaoh is attacking. It seems unfair to go through such difficulties, but we need to remember that it is through those difficulties we learn God's faithfulness and the level of our faith in Him grows.

Conclusion: How do you handle life's difficulties? When the storms of life slam against your plans, how do you typically respond? Do you become fearful and anxious? Or do you trust the Lord to be your shelter and refuge?

One of the greatest misconceptions people have about the Christian life is the idea that everything in life gets easier when you follow Jesus. Often it is the exact opposite. Jesus said, *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). This was true of the great people of faith in the Bible.

- David faced Goliath.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the furnace.
- Daniel faced the lions' den.

In each situation these men desired to know and follow God. They faithed into God, and it was the Lord who put them in turbulent and impossible circumstances. They all responded in faith. They didn't fear the difficulties or death. They only feared God. They trusted Him to protect their lives. Do you trust the Lord? How do you normally respond to disappointment, hardship, and directions beyond your ability?