

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Escaping a Desperate Situation

KEY PASSAGE: Exodus 14:1-31 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Exodus 1:8 | Isaiah 41:9-13

► SUMMARY

Many of us are familiar with one of the most interesting and amazing events in the Old Testament, but we may not understand how it applies to us.

After all, how could an event that happened thousands of years ago be relevant in the 21st century? It's because nothing in the Bible is unnecessary or unimportant. Although civilizations and cultures frequently change, the principles found in Scripture remain constant because our God never changes. He has given us this book to teach us who He is and how He operates so we can apply His Word to our lives.

► SERMON POINTS

The book of Genesis records the story of Joseph, who was sold into Egyptian slavery by his jealous brothers. After God gave him the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, Joseph was promoted to the position of overseer of Egypt. His interpretation and wise advice saved the Egyptians from starvation due to an extended drought, and it also provided an opportunity for Joseph's extended family to join him in Egypt. The Israelites multiplied so quickly during their 400-year stay in Egypt that a future pharaoh, who didn't know Joseph, enslaved them because he was afraid they might become powerful enough to be a threat to the Egyptians.

God chose a Hebrew man named Moses to lead the sons of Israel out of Egypt. He'd been raised and educated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. However, after he killed an Egyptian who was beating a fellow Hebrew, he was forced

to flee for his life and ended up spending 40 years in the Midian wilderness until the day the Lord spoke to him in a burning bush. God sent Moses back to Egypt to set His people free and bring them to the land He'd promised to give them.

Because Pharaoh was hard-hearted and stubborn, the Lord sent 10 plagues to the land of Egypt. Finally, when the last plague resulted in the loss of all the firstborns in Egypt, Pharaoh relented and let the Hebrews go.

There are five principles we can learn from the Israelites great escape.

1. God always knows which way is best. Although Pharaoh had let the children of Israel leave Egypt after the 10th plague, shortly afterward he regretted his decision, assembled his army, and set out to bring them back. Under God's leadership the Israelites had arrived and set up camp near the Red Sea when Pharaoh and his forces overtook them. Upon seeing the Egyptian army coming toward them, they realized they were trapped and, in fear, called out to God. Although the situation looked desperate to the Israelites, the Lord was in control and was going to use this circumstance to show the Egyptians that He was Israel's God and the only true God.

Therefore, whenever we face difficult times, we too should call on the Lord and remember that He orchestrates such situations for His divine purposes, to demonstrate His glory, and to show us that His ways are always best.

2. God is faithful to provide for His people. When the Israelites lived in Egypt as slaves, they had nothing, yet

they came out with the riches of the land because the Lord used the 10 plagues to compel the Egyptians to supply them with whatever they wanted. The citizens were so anxious to get rid of them that they gave them their gold, silver, jewels, and clothing.

3. God is always present to guide His people. Although the Israelites thought they were trapped by the Egyptian army, in reality, God was the one who put them in this impossible situation because He had a great goal in mind that they couldn't perceive. The only way they could escape was if God intervened and rescued them.

Human reason is no match for the Lord's omniscience because He knows the beginning and the end of everything. Our response should be to trust Him and obey whatever He tells us to do. A lack of understanding of all the details is no excuse for disobedience and doubt.

4. God's simplest command can result in surprising and powerful consequences when we obey Him. The Israelites were no match for the Egyptian army with all their chariots. These former slaves were not trained soldiers and had no equipment with which to fight. Their only hope was to trust the Lord, who by His grace had kept them alive for all those years in the land of Egypt and caused them to proliferate into a great multitude.

"But Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent'" (Ex. 14:13-14). Then God said to Moses, "Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land" (vv. 15-16).

As the people marched forward at God's command, what seemed like an insurmountable situation became

a miraculous deliverance. The pillar of cloud moved behind the Israelites to separate the Egyptians from them as they crossed over the seabed between two walls of water. When the Egyptians followed them, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the water flowed back, killing Pharaoh and his entire army.

We must never look at our situations based on our own abilities but on God's faithfulness. Then in obedience we should follow His commands and trust Him to work out the situation and handle all the consequences.

5. Don't look for someone to blame for your circumstance, but look for God to help you. When the Israelites first realized that the Egyptians were closing in on them, they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt?" (v. 11).

It's always easier to blame someone else for our difficulties rather than to trust God's purposes and His faithfulness to us in the situation. But Isaiah tells us, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10).

► RESPONSE

- What is your first reaction when faced with a desperate situation? Have you ever tried to find your own way out instead of relying on the Lord? If so, what happened?
- Which of these five principles do you need to apply to your current or your next difficult problem?

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