

Sermon for September 13, 2026
"Exodus: Surrounded"

Exodus 14:19-31

Things were not going well for the Israelites that day; or so they thought. Oh, they were free from slavery. This God of theirs had convinced the Egyptians to let them go, but God had also angered Pharaoh. Now Pharaoh was bearing down on the Israelites and there was no place to run. Their backs were against the sea, and the chariots of Pharaoh's army were about to crush them.

They cried out to Moses, "Where there not enough graves in Egypt? You had to bring us out here to die? Hey, it's great that we are no longer slaves, but we'll soon be dead as well as free. Isn't it better to be a living slave than a free corpse? At least a living slave has a future. The Egyptians weren't all that bad anyway."

But we've all seen the movie "The Ten Commandments." We know what happens next. God tells Charleton Heston, I mean Moses, to raise his hands over the water and God parts the water. The Israelites escape through the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army drowned.

I've been there. No, not that geographical location on the banks of the Red Sea, but I have found myself on the banks of a few spiritual Red Seas in my life. When I was surrounded by an angry sea on one side and an angry mob on the other. It seemed that death would come either by the sword or by drowning. Even us preachers at times have asked, "Why did you lead me here Lord, were there not enough graves where I was before."

That is a universal experience among humans. We all find ourselves in situations like that from time to time. This is even more true for we Christians who follow Christ. We often find ourselves surrounded by enemies because Christ leads us there, just as God led Israel to the banks of the Red Sea. Christ doesn't lead us to the banks of a Red Sea to destroy us, but to make our salvation evident and to demonstrate God Almighty's power.

The testimony of Israel's deliverance on the banks of the Red Sea has much to teach us. It is a vivid example of God's saving power at work. It shows us what God does when we find have been led to the banks of a Red Sea and are facing the enemies of God. So, what should we do when we are surrounded?"

First of all, when our backs are to the sea, God protects us. When Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt the angel of the Lord was with them leading them. That angel appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It was a visible reminder of the power of God Almighty that was with them and was leading them. The first thing that happened when Pharaoh's army approached was that this pillar moved. It took its position between the Israelites and the Egyptian army.

When we have our backs against a wall and we are faced by God's enemies, that is the first thing God does for us. God moves to protect us. God does not lead us into a trap to let us be victimized. So, God stands between our enemies and us. God becomes our first line of defense and in that situation our defense is sure.

So, Pharaoh's army was prevented from attacking God's people by a pillar of divine fire and smoke. In the same way God will protect us from our enemies. They will be prevented from attacking us by God's hand.

Secondly, when our backs are to the sea God delivers us. Often times it is the least

imagined route of escape. One day a boy came home from Vacation Bible School and his mother asked him what he had learned. He said that he had learned that the Egyptian army was fighting the Israelites and the Israelites were out gunned. So, they were retreating, but their backs were against the sea. So, Moses called in the Corps of Engineers, and they built a pontoon bridge across the Red Sea so the Israelites could escape. Then after they escaped across the pontoon bridge, the Egyptians started to cross after them, so Moses blew up the bridge, and the Egyptians fell into the sea. Shocked his mother said, "It that what they told you at church?" The boy replied, "No, but you'd never believe what they said really happened." Obviously that little boy didn't believe it.

Have you ever heard it said that when a door closes, God opens a window? Well, that is what God did for the Israelites. At God's command Moses lifted his hands and God parted the Red Sea, and to their amazement God provided a way out of a seemingly hopeless situation.

God always works best when things seem hopeless, and no matter what Christ leads us into, he will always lead us out of it. It may not be the way out that you or I would have chosen, but it is always better. It is better because it is the way God has chosen.

Thirdly, when our backs are to the sea, God destroys our enemies. The Bible tells us that the Egyptians decided to follow the Israelites into the Red Sea, but their chariot wheels got bogged down. They soon realized that God was fighting against them. It was too late. Moses stretched out his hand and the Red Sea closed in on the Egyptians destroying all who would make war on God's people.

God will do the same for us. You may say, "Hold on now preacher. Sure, God protects us and gives us an escape, but our enemies still persist. God hasn't utterly destroyed our enemy." Ultimately, our enemy is evil, the Devil for you prefer, and evil still lives and is still creating trouble in our world. Evil takes different forms: injustice, prejudice, violence of many kinds ...

Like the hymn says, the Devil's doom is sure. The Egyptian army was defeated long before Moses stretched out his arms to close the Sea on them. Their fate was decided when they followed the Israelites into the sea. In the same way evil's fate is already decided. It was decided when God's Son stretched his arms out on a cross. Jesus will come again soon and all that is contrary to God's plan will be done away with.

Earlier I asked the question, "What should we do when we are surrounded?" If you have noticed I haven't talked about what we should do. All I have done is talk about what God does. That is as it should be. It's God's actions that are important in those situations.

You see Israel couldn't get out of the situation they were in. They didn't have the power to fight the Egyptians. They were just a bunch of undisciplined escapees. They had no organization or weapons to speak of. They would be crushed under the wheels of the Egyptian war machine. Yet, God had the power to deliver them. All they had to do was to follow God and trust the might of the Almighty.

So, the next time you find your back to the sea, look to God. Think not about what you can do, but what God can do. If God calls you to walk across the bottom of a sea, just believe. Remember that God will protect you, God will deliver you, and God in Christ has already defeated your enemies.