

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Two weeks ago we heard how the Lord called Moses to deliver Israel out of forced labor in Egypt.

Last week, you contemplated the 10th plague over Egypt, the Passover,

which finally broke Pharaoh so that he not only let Israel go, but commanded them to go.

Israel left that very next morning defiantly, and the Lord moved them about as if they were lost.

This caused Pharaoh to forget why he had driven them away.

His greed for their free forced labor drove him to pursue after Israel to bring them back.

Imagine the terror in Israel's heart. Wandering around, seemingly aimlessly, still on Egyptian soil,

brought to the beaches of a waterfront with Egypt's world-class military behind you,

and you are nothing but a bunch of ex-slaves without any weapons of your own.

Then the Lord speaks to you by Moses...

... *We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." ...

Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. ... And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

...And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained....

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians... Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Israel had every reason to fear as they looked at the scene with their earthly eyes.

There was no way of escape. It looked like certain death and re-captivity for Israel.

They were afraid. The water would keep them trapped as Egypt advanced upon them.

How quickly Israel forgot the Lord, even though He was the One leading them in the cloud.

Of course, some of them probably accused Him of getting them into this situation in the first place.

Israel quickly turned to Moses and complained.

The complaint wasn't the type that we see in so many of the Psalms

where the trouble is put before the Lord and left there for Him to figure out,

trusting that He will do something about it for the good and welfare of His children.

That would be a complaint expressed with faith, and that has the blessing of Scripture.

But this was a faith-less complaint, "Weren't there enough graves in Egypt?"

It would have been better to have died in slavery than to die out here. It's your fault, Moses."

This is what the devil was truly after.

King Pharaoh and his horsemen, they were merely the devil's pawns in his spiritual battle with God. If he can make a situation look helpless, hopeless, then he can shake your trust in the almighty God. Pharaoh's attack was ultimately to be an attack on the 1st commandment, (Having no other gods.) tempting Israel not to fear the Lord, in fact, to hate Him for putting them in this position, and certainly never to trust in Him that He can save them from Pharaoh's or satan's hand.

By making them focus on the danger that they saw with their eyes, he led them to forget about the salvation that God had already (so recently) given them. The devil tempted them not to believe that the almighty God would be able to save them now. Thus their immediate faith-less complaint.

But when they recognized their complete helplessness, this is when the Lord chose to act. Their salvation, yet again, would not be by their own hand, but undeniably by the hand of God. Note what tasks the Lord gave to Israel,
Fear not – that is, do not be afraid of the enemy.
Stand firm – that is, do not be so easily moved to unbelief.
And see the salvation of the Lord – that is, observe so that you can witness His saving acts.
The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent,” that is, stop faith-lessly complaining.

Then they witnessed the Lord in the cloud move between themselves and their enemy. They saw the water open as Moses raised his staff over it and dry ground appeared. They walked into the sea surrounded by water and backed by the cloud until everyone safely reached the other side. Then, again, with a wave of the rod, the water flooded back together over their enemy, thus cutting off any reason for them to fear Egypt's military might. It was a complete victory that Israel played absolutely no role in, not in its planning, nor in execution.

Dearly beloved by God,
This same scenario is played out each and every day in your life. The devil acts like Pharaoh and tries to cause you to fear his power. He does this in order to try to get you to forget about God's almighty power... and love for you. The devil desires to separate you from God. Therefore, every temptation is always aimed with the intention of killing your faith. Lies, slander, dishonoring authority, greed, lust, coveting, hatred, ungodly fear... none of these are the end in and of themselves for a baptized child of God, because the devil knows that Jesus, the Passover Lamb, has already redeemed you, that is, He has already freed you from the punishment of these sins. These temptations are a means to an end, and the end is to make you afraid, to lead you to hate and distrust God and His Word, to make you forget His promises and Christ's work of salvation, and to lean on your own might and understanding. And how often have these temptations worked, and you have found yourself complaining to God, not in faith, laying the situation at His nail-pierced feet, but with hopelessness and even defiance.

Realize that our battle is not against flesh and blood, just as Israel's battle wasn't against Pharaoh.

Your battle is against the spiritual forces, and so you need spiritual weapons.

Notice that it wasn't until Israel realized that they were helpless that Lord decided to act. It was all part of God's plan. How else would He convince them to willingly walk through two walls of water and thus **be baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea?** 1Corinthians10:1-2

But just as the Lord used Egypt to push Israel through the water, so the Lord would use the fearful, helpless situations in your life to push you back to your baptism. It is another way in which He helps you to see the saving power of water with His Word. But the water of Baptism looks so powerless. How can this help in times of distress?

When Israel walked to the other side and the Egyptian forces were drowned in the water, Israel was sealed as God's child. They were His. He delivered them. He saved them. Not by any of their works, but by His own planning and execution. What had caused them fear was completely wiped out. Egypt had no power over Israel anymore.

This is what your baptism is for you. It is not your work, but God's work of salvation for you. It drowns your faithless complaints, your fears and feelings of hopelessness as it reminds you that you are sealed as God's redeemed child. It unites you to Christ in faith, the very thing that satan aims to destroy. Jesus Christ has put Himself between you and the devil, and separated you so that you can focus on Him and His salvation.

Does death scare you? Is your conscience burdened? Are you afraid of meeting God as your judge? He has already sacrificed Jesus Christ on the cross as your passover Lamb to free you from your sin. The devil, though he rages and runs after you like Pharaoh did the Israelites, he has no power over you. You are not his slave to sin, to greed, lust, hate, or fear anymore. Though he tempt you, your baptism into Christ has released you from his power. St. Paul tells us, **God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.** 1Corinthians10:12-13

Note that He doesn't say that temptations won't come to you, or that He will immediately take them from you, but that He has a way of escape for you and He will help you endure them. That way of escape is your Baptism into Christ – your full and free redemption. And for your endurance He gives you Christ's body and blood to eat and to drink, a spiritual protein bar for the spiritual nourishment needed for long-enduring spiritual struggles.

Hear again the Lord's Word to His people who are in distress:
Fear not, for the Lord fights for you.
Stand firm, not in your own might, but in the powerful waters of Baptism,
and see the salvation of the Lord, Your crucified and risen Lord,
uniting Himself to you against the power of the devil in your Baptism, and in His Supper.
Truly, one little word can fell him – And that word is Jesus.

Soli Deo Gloria

