

Exodus 14:13-14

13 september 2020

The Lord says here in Exodus 14:13-14: *Fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.* Fear is not a small thing, to many of us. We live in a world full of danger. Many people are afraid of the pandemic or of other threats.

Last Tuesday, we had our first online meeting and studied together an Anglican Catechism. We talked, between others, about the different angles to understand the gospel. The gospel is not only about sin and forgiveness. That is the core of the gospel and is the vantage point of the Reformation. There are other perspectives, just as

The fall of man has affected different areas of the lives of all of us. And Jesus' redeeming death and resurrection touches all those different areas. In other cultures, and eras, the following perspectives have been emphasized:

1. Death and life
2. Shame and honor
3. Fear and faith
4. Deviation and purpose
5. Brokenness and wholeness
6. Injustice and justice
7. Sin and redemption

Each of those perspectives has a certain emphasis in different cultures. We talked about honor and shame.

Jos shared how, in the Egyptian culture, Christians see how sin is shameful, even for the Creator himself. I shared how in the Rwandan culture; sin becomes a reality when it is in the open. Being exposed leads to shame. Jesus on the cross despites the shame and brings humanity back to God's purpose, dignity and honor is restored.

Our chapter is the core of the story of the Exodus. This event is repeated and quoted time and again. For example, in Psalm 114, which we read. The Psalm talks

about the event of the Exodus and suddenly, we are crossing the Jordan at the border of Israel, and not the Nile or whatever water it was they crossed. Meaning, that in the revelation, all the salvation stories are sort of the same, with this as the main event, as the core, as the paradigm for the history of salvation in both the Old as the New Testament. The Salvation God brings, repeats itself in the light of an earlier generation.

It is like rowing, with your back to what comes. The orientation is repeated. It is new, but the same.

Israel comes out of slavery. For years, the Israelites lived in Egypt in situation of injustice and faced cruelty, tyranny, exploitation, discrimination, and profound fear.

Over thirty years ago, I lived for a year in Lima, in the same neighborhood where Gustavo Gutierrez, who initiated the Liberation theology, was raised, and still lived. It was an extremely poor and rough neighborhood. Thousands of peoples lived in shacks, and even the richer amongst them were poor. The political system was corrupted, the poor were marginalized and abused.

I remember the arrival. I fell, as we say in Dutch, with our noses in the butter, meaning that from the beginning I witnessed first-hand how oppression and poverty impacts a whole society like the neighborhood San Martin de Porris in Lima.

The guerilla group Sendero Luminoso held a meeting in the house opposite where I stayed on the very first night after my arrival -to teach the poor about the unjust society and the justice they were supposed to bring.

The Liberation Theology saw the powers of evil and injustice of the society reflected in the story of the Exodus. Forces of evil were dominant in Egypt, and the Lord liberates his people out of their bondage and sets them free, giving them a whole new life and blessed them with Kingdom rules that helped justice to prevail in their society.

The situation of injustice caused the Israelites to fear.

They were beaten up, abused, forced to labor, and had no freedom what soever in Egypt. They lived in fear and their voices came before the throne of God.

We know the history: God calls Moses, and the Egyptians let his people go after ten horrible plagues. Our story is sort of the eleventh plague. The plagues, most probably, have already brought new fears to the Israelites. At the same time, they

saw their God rescuing them time and again. Now, they are at the point of crossing the sea. And Pharaoh, who let the Israelites go, regretted his decision. He assembled his army, with horses and chariots, and went after the Israelites.

The people of Israel cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?"

What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'?"

They are slightly forgetful at this point, because just a few chapters before, they were in awe of everything that God was doing to liberate them and worshipped the Lord. We have a sort of a short memory when it comes to the great deeds of the Lord in our lives. But God stands in the gap. God put the cloud of his presence between the enemy and his people, and Moses stretched out his arm.

The sea opened and Israel could go through it, with walls of water to the left and to the right, on dry land. Fantastic story. They reached the other shore, and as soon as they arrived, the water fell back, and all the Egyptians drowned.

We can think that this is the ultimate experience. Better than our salvation. The Israelites saw with their own eyes, how God worked. They lived it, they experienced salvation firsthand. But how come that, after they had seen the Lord's work through all the plagues, that they still doubted and feared?

How is it, that as soon as the desert hit, they started to grumble and told Moses to return to Egypt? Isn't that like our own experience?

We experienced God's love and salvation. First, we lived in bondage, and sin was part of our lives. Then, we realized that we could live by faith and grace, and we experienced God's forgiveness, we are set free. The fear is gone, the slavery is over, we are not under the yoke of the evil one anymore. But very soon, we start to try to do it ourselves. Christians love DIY. It is a trap to all of us. We try to be good Christians and before long, we start to work our salvation by our own strength, with a list of Do's and Don'ts.

Tim Keller puts this DIY-attitude as follows, he says: You can take the slave out of the slavery, but you cannot take the slavery out of the slave.

Here is what Keller means. Objectively, we are free. We know that with our head. We are forgiven. We are in Christ now. The Old is gone, we are new creations in Christ. But subjectively, we are living in bondage. We still fear. We still have habits that are from before our liberation. We still worship some of the idols of the time

before Christ redeemed us. One pastor compares our attitude with slaves that are set free. In the US, in the time after slavery was abolished and the 13th Amendment was adopted on December 18, 1865, Black peoples were officially freed from slavery. But imagine, ten years later, when a former Slave owner would yell at a former slave, how that felt? It most probably felt like still being in bondage. That is how we many times react. We are objectively freed from bondage. But in our hearts, it can feel differently. We can still be slaves in our hearts.

How can we change that attitude? God answers to the cry of his people: *Fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.* Instead of fear, the Lord gives faith. He encourages his people to trust, to have faith, to rest in what He was going to do. *The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*

The New Testament claims that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is the very Exodus we rely on. He is the fulfillment of this event.

The greatest Exodus in history is not the crossing of the waters in Egypt but is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 9, when he at the transfiguration stands on the mountain with Moses, he talks about his departer. That is what the English says. In Greek, it says that the one thing Jesus talked about with Moses, was his Exodus. And Luke explains that the Exodus his death was, in Jerusalem. In another place, in John 5:24, Jesus says *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.*

‘Passed’ is ‘crossed over.’ Here he talks about how the Exodus of his death and resurrection changes us, who trust in Him. It makes us cross the river the moment we believe. Meaning that we crossed, by faith, that river. Past tense. He who believes does not come into judgment but has crossed from death to life. That is our Exodus.

The reality is, when we put our trust or faith in Jesus, that this Exodus has happened. The Church of all ages connects the great event of the Exodus with our Baptism. The Protestant church in the Netherlands connects this event with Baptism in the prayer that accompanies the sacrament, *Thou who drowned the hardened Pharaoh with all his people in the Red Sea, and led thy people Israel through it dry-footed, by which baptism was signified.*

Tertullian does the very same in his book on Baptism, where he says: *when the people, set unconditionally free, escaped the violence of the Egyptian king by crossing over through water, it was water that extinguished the king himself, with his entire forces. What figure more manifestly fulfilled in the sacrament of baptism? The nations are set free from the world by means of water, to wit: and the devil, their old tyrant, they leave quite behind, overwhelmed in the water.* (Tertullian, On Baptism)

That means, that the old has gone. There is no need to live further in slavery. Christ has liberated us. We are set free. The devil is conquered. By faith we died with Christ and are resurrected with Him. We are new creatures.

That means that there is no need to live with our hearts in a system of slavery. We are liberated. Egypt is passed. We walk with Jesus to the promised land. Jesus himself said: So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. You will be absolutely free. Freed from the tyranny of sin and satan. Free to cross the river of death without fear. Free to be loved by God and to love Him without fear.

Fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. Amen.