Exodus - Commentaries by William John Hocking

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Notes of an Address on Exodus 14:13

The first part of the verse is that to which I would draw your special attention this evening: “Fear ye not,” said Moses, “stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you today.”

The salvation of God is a matter which concerns everyone of us, and concerns us in all the practical matters of our daily life. It is a truth which will be for our help and blessing if we make it our own; if, in the words of the text, we see for ourselves, according to the teaching of God's holy word, His great salvation.

It is a great error to suppose that salvation is only concerned with the days that are to come, that it is only a provision we need in immediate view of eternity, when we are leaving this world behind and passing to what lies beyond. No. Salvation concerns us now and here just where we are. The particular way in which salvation is of value for the present moment is shown us in this Scripture. The truth herein foreshadowed is applicable particularly to those who have already considered the matter of their personal salvation, and have to some extent taken up a stand for Christ here in the world. They must, in the terms of the historical allusion here turn their backs upon Egypt, and their faces towards the promised land of God.

And it is to this class of persons that I particularly wish to speak this evening. You will remember that this nation had, according to the direction of God, come out from Egypt. And indeed they had been brought out of Egypt in a marvelous way. I want you to think for a moment of the last night that the people spent in that land of bondage. They were there in an attitude of expectation, waiting according to the instruction of Jehovah for the event which He had told them would take place that night. He had told them that the angel of judgment would pass through the land of Egypt. He would be there by way of bringing down upon men the judgment that they deserved on account of their sins.

It was not then the time for the judgment of God to fall in its entirety upon the whole population of that land. But God was about to show His power and His right to execute judgment by passing through the land, and in every house where there was a first-born son he would be slain, with this exception—such as believed the word of Jehovah and prepared for this visitation of judgment in His appointed way, and took shelter that evening under the sprinkling, on the door-post, of the blood of a slain lamb, should be exempt. They should be free in the hour of judgment. They should be absolutely safe for the word of Jehovah said it.

And so it came about on the night of the pass-over. The wail of suffering rose from Egypt's houses, but Israel was free. These were delivered, not because they were better men than the Egyptians, but because they had obeyed the word of Jehovah, doing exactly what they were told to do by the servant of the Lord, Moses., And they were then brought out of their slavery.

But now the people of Israel were here in the wilderness, for such it was. They were led there by express direction of God, the pillar of cloud going before them and leading them to a particular place, and to a place which was beset with difficulties. They had before them the waters of the Red Sea; they had to the right and to the left of them unscalable cliffs, mountains being to the right and to the left of them. And it was there that the army of Pharaoh, which pursued them came in sight of them and threatened them that they should be brought back to slavery, and it was then that their hearts ached with fear. They were a vast host—six hundred thousand men beside children. Behind them the cavalry of Egypt came on in furious haste. They were a great crowd, but what resistance could they make in their own strength? They knew how to make bricks, and even how to make bricks without straw; and to bear the whip of Egypt's taskmaster. But to fight him with the weapons of war they were unable.

What, then, was the feeling is the hearts of those men and women? ‘This is a lost cause: we have started on a journey in error; we have come out on a mission which is doomed to absolute failure. We have no strength to meet this host of Egypt. It would have been better for us to have died in Egypt than to have come out on this fool's errand.' Then it was that the word of God came to them “Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD which He will show to you today.” And their salvation came. The power of God opened up a way of escape for them through the Red Sea. We are not here to-night to discuss the means by which this was done. We do know that the power of Jehovah worked on behalf of is people, and that His people escaped from their enemies, and that the Egyptians were overthrown.

But you ask, How does that fit in with my life? How does that come by way of help to me? Dear friends, if you have considered truly and earnestly that you would be a Christian, that you would walk in the ways of the Lord, that you would follow the meek and lowly Nazarene through this world, and if you have been but a little time on that way, have you not already encountered your difficulties? Have you not found that because you are a Christian, and just for that—and for no other reason, everyone is against you? And there is a hostile power, and though you know not what that power is, or how it works, there is, I say, a power that baffles your way, and you fail. You are shown your path and you say ‘Yes, I will go forward.' Monday morning comes and the difficulties arise, and in the evening you know you have disgraced the One whom you wished to serve. There is, in short, a power within and without antagonistic to you.

Many a time, perhaps, you say to yourself, ‘It would have been better for me if I had never made a start: I am not worthy to be called a disciple of Christ,' and you perhaps feel ready to throw it all up and go back to that bondage, that terrible slavery, to sin and Satan, in which once you were held. I read this word to you to-night, “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”

There was a man of whom we read in the New Testament, a man who knew something of the temptations of the world. He was strong in his own strength, a man of earnest passions and feelings—an impetuous man, a man full of love and devotion for the Lord Jesus Christ, a man who felt that he could fight and resist any temptation because of the love he had for his Master. He made a bold profession. When men turned away from Him, he said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And this man it was—Simon Peter, going forward to meet the power of the world in his own strength, who made a miserable failure. His great error was that he under-rated the power of the world, and he over-estimated his own strength to meet it. When the Lord spoke to His disciples on the night of His betrayal and told them that they would leave Him alone and turn from Him, Peter, strong in his devotion, said, “Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will not I.” “I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death.” And yet, before many hours were passed away, he had denied his Master with oaths and curses. He went in his own resolution to face the power of the world. He entered the high priest's palace and mingled with the soldiers of the high priest, associating and fraternizing with the world. He was standing in his own strength, and he denied that he knew the Lord, denied with oaths and curses any knowledge of Him.

Beloved friends, do you believe that there is a power in this world which is ever waiting to assault your fidelity and insult the cross? Do you believe that that power of the world and the evil within your own heart is more than you can master in your own strength? If not, you may find it so to your deep sorrow and shame. When Peter had denied his Master thrice, he suddenly found the eyes of his Master upon him. The Lord looked upon Peter, and Peter went out weeping bitterly. He felt how grievous was his fault. The Master said, “Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice,” but Peter would not be warned. He went to face the power of Pharaoh and his host in his own strength, and be failed. Yet the word came to him, as it were. ‘Fear not, Peter, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.' He had fallen to the dust, but there was One ready to lift him up and give him further power. And afterward we actually read how the man who denied his Master three times went forth in the face of Jerusalem and the whole world, boldly declaring the salvation of the Lord.

This divine power for salvation is what I want you to see. It is one thing for a man to find out his own weakness. It is another thing to find out the power that wishes to drag him back into bondage. It is yet another to find out how great is the power of God and His salvation.

I like to think about this aspect of salvation in connection with the glorious person of Him who was the Savior. I like to read, too, of the scene presented to us in the second chapter of Luke, when that little Babe was brought in to the old man Simeon, who had waited long, hoping that the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah might be fulfilled in his day. And when they brought in the Babe Jesus, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

There it is for us: the infant Jesus, the salvation of God. Do you not see it there in that blessed person? There is no power elsewhere. So far as the world judges, you would not look at a babe for power and strength, but it was just there that God's power, God's grace too, was seen by faith in the person of Jesus. But you have to look farther on in the history of that Blessed One, and consider another scene. The angel said, “And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” And if you look elsewhere you will see that name emblazoned upon the cross of Calvary: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” So far as the world was able to see, there was never such a spectacle of weakness as was presented in Jesus on the cross. There was Jesus who had raised the sick, healed the leper, given sight to the blind, stilled the waves of the sea—there He was between two malefactors. The very heavens were darkened above Him. Those shoulders uphold the worlds, yet was He nailed to the cross! Beloved friends, the salvation of the Lord was nevertheless there in that Nazarene. He is the salvation of the Lord.

There was a man who, in that tragic hour, found out this truth, a man whose life had been blasted by sin, and there he turned his face to Jesus. He looked in dim faith to Jesus, and there was power in the Crucified to change that blackened soul, and to cleanse him from all guilt, and to give him an entrance that day into the Paradise of God.

Beloved friends, Christ, the power of God, was there! And He is a power stronger than the power of the world. I would have you to look further still. I would have you look up to the right hand of the throne of God, Who is there? The same Jesus, the One who died; the crucified One is now in glory; and this is the One to whom also you are called to appeal for needed power. Are you in your sins? There is the cross, and the blood that cleanseth from all sin. As the man who was an Israelite could look back to the blood of the paschal lamb and know that that blood shielded him from God's judgment, so now you may look at the blood of Jesus Christ that God may cleanse you from your sins. But you must look up to the throne of God to see One there who has conquered Satan, who rose and ascended triumphant over death, and is there to help you here in the daily struggle in which you engage against the power of sin and Satan, Will you be enslaved by your own sinful habits? Will you be carried away by the lusts and passions of your own evil heart?

If not, you must stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. I know that there are a great many who look continually at the cross alone, and therefore know nothing of the deliverance of grace. They listen to a single text of Scripture— “I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified,” and refuse to heed any other. Hence they are; ignorant of the peace of God.

You ought to know also the power of the living Christ; to know that the man Christ Jesus can supply you with every needed strength, grace and wisdom which you may require in your path here. You have all that and more when you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One to whom you can look for succor and blessing under all circumstances. Hence you may take the word of Moses to yourself, “Fear not"; fear no evil, and fear no terrible thing. The fear of temporal power and of national disaster now is great and widespread, but what is the fear of the forces of this world? What is the fear of those that kill the body? Would that there was more fear of him that wars against the soul. Men follow one another heedlessly in the paths of sin, they drink deeply of its pleasures, only to find the misery it brings. They quickly learn that the impelling power is so great that they cannot resist it. They hate their habits and despise themselves, and you find them driven to utter and hopeless despair, and tempted to end their wretched existence of bondage to sin. They often vainly seek some refuge in the grave, for the power which is impelling them seeks their certain destruction.

Take the herd of swine at Gadara, for instance. It was driven to destruction by a malevolent evil power. We read that the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and perished. It is often the same with men, and they have no power to help themselves out of their enslaving and debasing habits. They think nobody cares for them, and they go swiftly, madly down to death.

O dear hearer, let me tell you there is a mightier power for the Christian, for Christ is the power of God. Some do not realize how they need the Lord Jesus Christ every day. They think that though they need Him in the matter of their sins, they do not need Him in the matter of their

daily life. But it is not enough to look to Christ for forgiveness for all you have done. It is necessary to look to Him for guidance and victory every step of the way. Beloved friends, you know not what to-morrow may bring forth. You know not when your end may arrive, but whatever the period of your journey maybe, the apostolic principle is the only safe one for us all: “by the grace of God I am what I am.” It is only by His power and by His grace any of us can be preserved. “Fear ye not,” then “standstill, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

Now, what is meant by standing still? We must beware of a possible misapprehension of these words as if they imply that we have nothing whatever to do, as if it were sufficient for us to drift with the stream and let things take their course. There is something to be done, and you find later in the narrative that the people of Israel were told to go forward, even though the sea was in front of them; they were not on any account to turn back. Egypt was behind. They were never to think of retracing their steps with the strength that God would provide. What, then, does He mean by standing still? I think the word implies that they were to consider calmly their position from the divine standpoint. They were to dismiss their anxieties, they were to give up every fear, and to contemplate what power there was in Jehovah. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” The flower of Pharaoh's army was surely something not to be despised, as it was viewed humanly.

They might well fear that armed host. And the mountains were not to be scaled, and the sea was impassable, measuring both by human standards. Their position to a faithless man seemed hopeless, but let them only bring in God as their Helper, and “if God be for us, who shall be against us?”

Do you know what it is to have proved His divine power for deliverance in your daily life, to have God bringing you through a sore trial or temptation. Beloved friends it is a grand experience to be able to look back upon one's past and say, “God brought me through that great crisis: how I got through I cannot explain, but I got through, and it was God who brought me through.”

I must leave this matter for your serious consideration. It is of practical importance, and concerns each one of us. So long as we are here in this world we are liable to come in contact with sinful men, with sin and the tendency to sin. We know the temptation to sin is very dangerous to a holy life. We have to be constantly on the watch and very vigilant. And we must continue to be on the alert, and further than this, we have to look with a fixed gaze in that direction alone from which help can come. Then in the moment of trial and in the moment of difficulty we shall find that help comes.

Men pride themselves in these days on the wonders of wireless telegraphy, but the wonders of prayer are far greater. Prayer ascends to heaven with more than lightning rapidity, and brings instant relief. This then is the manner in which you must “stand still.” You must cease from your own efforts and rest in faith, upon the power of Christ. There is a moment when there is nothing for you to do. You must cease from your own works, and let the power of God work for you.

“Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” How long will it take us to contemplate the entire extent of this salvation—to know it fully? The progress will be gradual. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that we can ever grow into this knowledge by vague dreams of the great power, goodness and love of God. There is the practice as well as the theory. We need continually to look upon Him as revealed in His word, but also in the hour of our need we should not fail to prove how ready He is to help. The true Christian life is not something to which we resort in moments when we have nothing else to do. When Sunday comes, because it is respectable, many are found in some place where the Bible is opened and read, and they hear of the delivering power of the Lord. But in the home, in the workshop, in the battle of life, everywhere we may learn by actual instance how the power of God is exercised in response to the person who waits upon Him.

Let me ask, Do you really believe that, in the matters that press most against you every day, God will interfere for your help and blessing if you only look to Him? Be assured that He will protect you from the greatest power that can oppose you—the power of Satan. The ways of the great enemy are subtle. Satan did not display or show himself in that instance to which I referred just now. No! The servant-maid was the means in Satan's hands of causing Peter to deny his Master. But the Lord had said before to Peter, “Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.”

Consider the two. There was on the one hand Jesus looking upon His disciple with a heart full of loving solicitude, and on the other hand Peter, passionately devoted, but full of self-confidence, thinking that he could overcome the spiritual Pharaoh and all his forces. And, indeed, he was carried through eventually. But, oh! that failure! Oh! the sadness of it, that the Man of sorrows should have had another anguish added as He saw what sin could do with a man who had turned away from the world and become His follower, that it could find an entrance into the heart of an apostle who had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that it should cause him to disgrace himself and deny his Master. It is so. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Never seek to meet the power of the world, the power of sin and Satan, in your own strength; but “Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

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