

Good morning! How is everybody? Good to see you. My name is Zach Lee. I'm one of the home group ministers here. If you right now are wishing I were Matt Chandler, be encouraged, because so do I. You would love that. I would love to *be* him. That would be great. But this is the lot we have from the Lord this morning. I'm excited to get to chat with you in the Lord's Word and get into this text. This is not part of our *Dearest Place on Earth* series. I don't want it to throw you. This is a stand-alone sermon. Before we get into that, I do want to pray for us. I know we just prayed. I just want to ask the Lord to bless this time and to be with us. Let me pray for us quickly.

Lord Jesus, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to you, so I just ask you would use some of that in here this morning, that we might touch the hem of your garment, and in so doing that, people would be healed, and in so doing that, people would be saved, and in so doing that, years of shame and guilt and weight would be washed away. I ask that you would protect us from spiritual attack. I just love you, and I thank you for your grace and your goodness to us. You are overwhelmingly kind. It's in your name and for your glory I pray, amen.

If you have a Bible, go ahead and flip open to Exodus, chapter 14, starting in verse 10. I wanted to mention before I get into this text, a few years ago I was actually blessed to get to go on a mission trip to Israel, which is a great place to visit. It's a great place to go on a mission trip because you can use your Old Testament, because you're primarily ministering to Jewish people and also ministering to a lot of Muslim people.

We had a lot of weird things happen during the trip. The first thing that happened is every single airport I went to pulled me aside for that extra security check. Do you know what I mean? Not where you just walk by and they scan your shoes, but the one where they point you out and pull you out. There are always scarier-looking people around you, but they always pick you out and pull you out. Apparently I look like a terrorist or a creeper or something.

So they pull me out. We do the extra check. I get on the plane. I hate flying. First, because I've had bad experiences. Second, because I get crazy airsick. I can't read a book. I can't watch a movie. I just sit there and try not to throw up on the person in front of me. So I get on the plane. We fly. We land in Frankfurt, Germany. I'm going to get my connecting flight. I get pulled aside by security again, but this time I'm in Germany. I'm having James Bond flashbacks. It's terrifying. I'm trying to figure out how I can escape.

They pull me aside, and this guy who's patting me down (who may or may not be in the Gestapo) puts his hand on the inside of my belt and goes around my waist. Now I don't speak German, so I'm like, "Nein! Nein! No! No me gusta!" I'm trying to figure out... So he stops this invasive search. Later we found out the guy didn't even work for the airport. I'm just joking. That's not true. He was a legit security officer.

So I get through that, get on my connecting flight, buckle up, fly in, try not to throw up, land in Tel Aviv, Israel, and we had a phenomenal mission trip. We got to share Christ with Jewish people. We got to share Christ with Muslim people. A lot of crazy things happened, though, while we were on this trip. We went during the Hamas war, if you remember that, a few years ago. In the Middle East, everyone is just always carrying around machine guns. You don't really get used to that. You're in what is their equivalent of a Walmart, and there are AK-47s everywhere.

When they're on high alert, they (including the women) just carry around bigger machine guns. If you're in Israel and you're a citizen, as a woman you have to be in the military. So you'll see some 18-year-old girl with a nose ring and an Uzi. Incidentally, there are less cases of sexual assault in Israel because of that. You try to start messing with some woman, and she will just Krav Maga punch you in the neck. It just puts an end to some of that nonsense.

As we're going throughout Israel and we're doing our ministry thing, we had a guy come up and try to buy one of the women in our party for some camels. Now I don't have a category for that. This merchant from Saudi Arabia comes up, and he's like, "I will give you 15 camels for this beautiful woman." We're like, "Are you kidding me? She's worth at least 20 camels!" So we're haggling back and forth. Needless to say, we didn't sell our friend into slavery, because friends don't sell friends into slavery.

Walking back after this encounter, I'm thinking to myself, "What if we had said yes?" What would this woman's life have been like to move from the freedoms she has known, the family she has known, the friends she has known, into slavery, to be told what to do, where to go, if she will or will not have kids, to never see her family again, to not get to flourish? That blew my mind. We don't usually think about what it would be like to be property. A hundred and fifty years ago we would have, but we don't usually think about what that means.

The reason I mention that for this text in Exodus is if you don't see how oppressive... If you don't see the weight and the pain and all of that slavery going on in Exodus, the passage doesn't make as much sense. When you are property, when you are a slave, you're owned. You're told what to do, where to go. You work all day in the hot sun, go home, and eat just enough food to get strength so you can go back the next day and work all day.

If you're owned by the Egyptians, if they want to rape your wife, they will. If you're owned by the Egyptians, if they want to kill your kid, they will. You don't have your rights. You cannot flourish. It is oppressive and weighty, and it's used in Exodus to talk about where God's people were. It's used in the New Testament to talk about what sin does to us. Far from being something that is fun and free, it actually shackles and enslaves and ruins our lives.

So with that sort of idea of slavery in mind, let's look at verse 10. **"When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD."** Let me give you some more context. This isn't part of our *Dearest Place* series. The dearest place is not Egypt. This is a stand-alone. Let me give you some context of what has happened thus far throughout the book of Exodus.

Think of the movie *The Ten Commandments*. Are you with me? Charlton Heston, the buff, smooth-chested Jew, who's supposed to be 80 and looks about 45, delivers God's people out of Egypt. Here's the story. In Genesis 3, mankind rebelled against God. The reason the world is broken... If you've ever asked yourself, "Why is there cancer? Why do people get murdered? Why are there earthquakes? Why is there molestation? Why are all of these terrible things?" it's because we walked away from God in Genesis 3, and we got the results of those things.

But because God is loving, he decided not to leave us there. He goes to Abraham, and through his descendants, the Jews, the Israelites, he says, "Through you I'm going to send a Savior, and that Savior is going to put the world back to rights. That Savior is going to get us back to Eden." So he chooses these people, Israel.

Now at this point in the story, Israel had migrated to Egypt because of a famine. They didn't have food, so they went to Egypt and their borders because they needed some food. But a new pharaoh had arisen in Egypt who did not like and did not know Israel. This pharaoh was paranoid. He was worried the Hebrews would keep populating, and then they would take over Egypt. They might join one of Egypt's neighbors and fight against them. They might lead a coup or a rebellion.

So this pharaoh meets with some midwives. At this point in world history, you don't have MDs doing C-sections; you have midwives, women who help another woman give birth. He meets with these midwives and says, "If the Hebrews give birth to a girl, you can let her live, but if the Hebrews give birth to a boy, I want you to kill him. Throw him in the Nile. Let a crocodile eat him. Let him die from exposure. Let him drown. It's men who fight in war, and it's men who lead rebellions. If they give birth to a son, you kill him."

But these Hebrew midwives fear God, so they disobey Pharaoh, and he calls them to account. He goes, "Listen, I see a bunch of little Hebrew boys running around here. What is going on?" I love the excuse the midwives give Pharaoh. They say, "The Hebrew women just give birth too fast. They're not like the Egyptian women. The Egyptian women are wimps. They languish, and they're in labor for like three weeks. The Hebrew women are popping them out like Pez dispensers. There are just babies everywhere." So Pharaoh puts out this decree to all of Egypt: "If the Hebrews give birth to a boy, you kill him."

This one family has a little boy, and they've been hiding this boy. Soldiers come and knock on the door, and they hide the baby. "No. No babies here." "All right," and they go on. Eventually they can't keep hiding him, because he's going to get killed. So they put this baby in a basket, cover the bottom of it with pitch, which is this waterproof tar, and push the baby out on the river for literally God knows what. "We don't want to kill the baby. We don't want the Egyptians to kill him. Down the river. God, it's your thing to do what you want to do."

So this baby is floating down the river, and in a sense of providential irony, Pharaoh's daughter is hanging out by the water, having a little party with her friends, listening to Ke\$ha, or whatever, hanging out by the pool. This baby comes and gets stuck in the bulrushes, and Pharaoh's daughter does what every teenage girl does when she sees a baby. She runs and picks it up and says, "Mine."

So she runs and pulls this baby out of the water, which is why his name is *Moses*, by the way. *Moshe* in Hebrew means to draw out. She pulls him out of the water and adopts him into Pharaoh's household. Moses grows up in the education of the Egyptians. In the ancient Near East, they were *crème de la crème* as far as arts and sciences and these kinds of things. So Moses grows up and gets this great education in Pharaoh's household.

One day when he's older, he's walking along, and he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, so Moses kills that Egyptian with his bare hands, which is burly. When you don't use a weapon and you *are* a weapon, it's a different level. He kills this guy, buries him in the sand, and goes out into the wilderness where he lives for many, many years. He flees out of fear, not out of faith. Moses is not this perfect, faithful character. Then you get the burning bush, where God says to Moses, "You're going to deliver my people. You're going to go and set my people free."

Moses again doesn't respond in faith. He goes, "But I don't talk good. I still write stuff in crayon. I'm not good with speech. I can't go talk to Pharaoh." God is like, "Hey, listen. I'm God. I'm really good at getting done what I want to get done." God gives Moses his name. God's name is not *God*. That's what he is. His name is *Yahweh*. In the same way my name is not *human*, it's *Zach*, God's name is *Yahweh*. He gives him

this special covenantal name, *I Am*. Those words are related in Hebrew. "I Am. *Yahweh* is my name. Tell them I'm the one behind you."

Moses is 80 at this time, by the way. If you're a more seasoned member of this church, just be encouraged that the Lord can still use you. He's 80. So Moses, because he's 80, goes down, gets in his Lincoln Town Car, and drives to Egypt with his blinker on. He finally gets to Egypt... I'm going to get in trouble for that. Oh, I'm sorry. Other elders and pastors, forgive me. Okay, he drives to Egypt, goes before Pharaoh, and says, "Let my people go. Let my people go." Pharaoh says, "I'm not going to let them go."

Then you get the plagues. The plagues are not just these cool miracles, although they are that. The plagues are directed against the so-called gods of Egypt. For example, the Egyptians worshiped the sun god, Ra. So guess what one of the plagues is? Yahweh blots out the sun. God is blotting out *their* god, Ra. The Egyptians would worship the frog god, Heqet. Guess what one of the plagues is? Frogs multiply and infest everything. The priests go to Heqet and beg Heqet to take them away, and they pray to Heqet, but nothing happens. Do you know why? Because it's Yahweh who runs stuff, not Heqet.

The Egyptians would worship the Nile goddess, Anuket, because the Nile brings fruitful seasons and all this kind of stuff. Guess what one of the plagues is? The Nile and the waters in Egypt turn to blood, because Yahweh is killing Anuket. If you don't believe me, Exodus 12:12 says specifically that God is waging war against the gods of Egypt. The Egyptians would worship Pharaoh and his son as demigods, so one of the plagues is that the firstborns in Egypt are killed, as well as Pharaoh's son. In the same way Pharaoh tried to kill the Hebrew boys, Yahweh is killing the Egyptian boys.

Throughout this whole process, Pharaoh keeps changing his mind on whether or not he'll let the Hebrews go. He's like, "I'll let them go as soon as the plagues are gone." He decides to let them go, and then he changes his mind and takes them back. He decides to let them go; changes his mind. He also makes their work more difficult. These slaves are building these building projects out of clay bricks, and in those clay bricks you would put straw. It gives it stability. It's like rebar in concrete today.

Now in addition to having to work all day in the sun, build these projects, make these clay bricks, he now makes the Israelites cut their own straw. All that means, if you got confused on all of the ancient building techniques, is simply he's making their work harder. They're already oppressed as slaves. Pharaoh is piling on more and more. It's more and more oppression, more and more weight, more and more pain.

They're finally on the cusp of salvation. They finally get let go. They're right on the edge of the sea. Pharaoh changes his mind, and you get verse 10. Let's look at it again. **"When Pharaoh drew near..."**

That's Pharaoh and his army. **"...the people of Israel lifted up their eyes..."** That's very much of a "walk by sight, not by faith" kind of comment.

They've been promised deliverance by God, they've experienced the miracles, but instead of trusting the Lord, they lift up their eyes, look, see what only they can see, **"...and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them..."** That *marching* is a military term. A few verses earlier it says they're in chariots. **"...marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD."**

This is not a cry of faith. This is not the Israelites saying, "Lord, I see all of these chariots and spears and swords coming. We have a broom and a shovel. I trust you." That's not what's going on. This is the same kind of cry you give out to the Lord right before you get in a car wreck. You're driving along and you're like, "O God, save me!" *Boom!* And then you get hit right there. It's maybe a tinge of faith, but primarily one of doubt and fear. How do I know that? Well, the clause right before that said they feared greatly, and look at verse 11. Tell me if *this* looks like faith.

"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"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.'"

In light of everything God has done, in light of the plagues, in light of these miracles, in light of this deliverance, the people's response is to doubt God and mock Moses. How much are we these people? God has done a lot of crazy cool things for me in my life. As soon as something like that arises, I'm like, "God, did you bring me out here to die in the wilderness?" I do the exact same thing.

They start mocking Moses. They say to him, "Hey, Moses, if you wanted us to die, we could have just stayed in Egypt. I don't know if you saw all of those pyramids. Those are tombs. Maybe you could have at least buried us in the sand like that Egyptian you killed. I would have loved to have a tombstone made from bricks made with less straw. That would have been awesome. We told you to leave us alone. We told you we could not imagine life without slavery. We could not imagine and think bigger, that there might be a bigger plan, a bigger thing than our chains." They mention something five times in two verses. See if you can catch it.

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Five times in two verses they mention *Egypt* or *Egyptians*. Their focus is not on Yahweh. Their focus is not on the Lord. Their focus is only on that problem, only on that enslavement. I don't have time to go into this in too much detail, but I want to give you a huge point here. You will not get out of your lust problem by focusing on your lust problem. You won't get out of your depression and anxiety by focusing on your anxiety. You won't get out of your anger by focusing on your anger. You won't get out of your insecurities by focusing on your insecurities.

You learn to grow through those things by focusing on Yahweh. Sometimes instead of making Jesus our Savior, we can make "not the sin" our savior. You don't get out of Egypt by focusing on Egypt; you get out of Egypt by focusing on Yahweh. Their eyes are not on the Lord; their eyes are just on this problem. They need deliverance, but they're not looking to the One who *can* deliver.

Now if you were God and the people responded this way, what would you have done? If I were Moses, I would have just hit them with my staff and been like, "I'll part something for you! Boom!" If I were God, I would have been like, "Fine. You want to mock me? You want to mock Moses? You want to doubt after everything I've done? You want Egypt? I'll give you all the Egypt you can handle underneath the wheels of their chariots. You want Egypt? Here they come, swords and spears sharpened. Mock me, doubt me, doubt my servant after everything I've done to you, grumble the whole time? Forget it!"

I think it was Luther who said, "If the world had treated me the way it has treated God, I would kick the vile, wretched thing to pieces." That's what God could have done, but look at verse 13: **"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's response in light of Israel's unfaithfulness is faithfulness. Where it says, "You'll never see the Egyptians again..." Let me explain what's going on here. This is not just a battle of a couple of countries a few thousand years ago. There is a bigger context and theme of spiritual warfare here. It's not just Israel versus Egypt; it's seen as God and Israel versus the Devil and Egypt.

In the Old Testament, God's physical people are very, very much linked with him. In the Old Testament, there are only two kinds of people. There's Israel who follows Yahweh, the one true God, and there's everyone else who follows the Devil. That's just how the Old Testament sees it. You either belong to Israel and you worship the one true God, or you belong to everybody else and you follow the Devil. That's what false gods are, by the way, the Bible says: demons. There's only one true God.

What happens is this is more than just physical warfare; this is also spiritual warfare. In fact, if you wanted to worship the one true God in the Old Testament, you had to convert to Judaism. You didn't have to be *born* an Israelite, but you had to *become* one. You had to be circumcised, keep the food laws, keep the Torah, follow the Sabbath, offer sacrifices... There is only God and his people versus the Devil and his people. Those are the only two ones that exist.

In the New Testament, Jesus fulfills what Israel was meant to be. Now everyone can have access to God through faith in Jesus. You're not saved by works of the law, like Paul says in Galatians. He mentions Jewish works: circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath. You're not saved by being a Jew; you're saved by putting your faith in Jesus, who allows you access to the one true God. That's why in the New Testament it says our enemies are not flesh and blood. Everyone has access to God through Christ.

But in the Old Testament, those flesh and blood enemies and the spiritual enemies go together. If you understand what I have just said, much of the Old Testament will make sense to you. When Israel goes into Canaan and they start killing everybody, of course they would. It's God and his people bringing judgment on those who are sacrificing their children to demons. It's bigger than just physical warfare; it's spiritual warfare.

Or there are times where I'm reading in Psalms, and King David will say something like, "Lord, dash my enemies' babies' heads against the rocks." You're just like, "What? Who do I pray this against? My neighbor Ted? He always leaves his trash cans by the curb. I hate that guy. Lord, may you smite Ted with a mighty sword." If you realize, though, King David is writing in a different time period where the physical and the spiritual people are Israel and God versus everyone else, it makes more sense. When David is praying that God would fight his enemies, those are seen as his physical/spiritual enemies.

Because Jesus has fulfilled the role of Israel, though, we no longer have enemies who wear skin. Our enemies are demons. So if you want to take those passages in Psalms and pray that God would protect you from demonic attack and that kind of stuff, go for it. That's how we would apply it today. I say all of that to say, though, this is in a context of spiritual warfare. This is not just Israel versus Egypt; it's God versus the Devil, which God said he was going to do. "I'm going to harden Pharaoh's heart so he disobeys, so I can crush him and get glory." Stick that in your theology pipe and smoke it. That's incredible.

I want to mention verse 14. Before I read verse 14, think about where Israel is right now. Think about their disobedience, their mockery, their lack of faith, their wickedness, their mocking Moses. They're at their worst. Look at verse 14: **"The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."** When does God decide to deliver Israel? At their best? When they're at their worst.

This is huge. I have a tendency to feel like God will deliver me when I make myself more deliverable. He'll part the sea, but I need to get in there and push with my arms and try to help get that water to stand up on the side. In light of Israel's unfaithfulness, God remains faithful. Here's how the New Testament would say it. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That's when he died for us. God sent his Son to die for his enemies while we still hated him. That's incredible. That is absolutely incredible.

The last part of this passage, where it says to be silent... In Hebrew it's two words. It's a stronger idiom in Hebrew. It means, "Shut up," or "Shut your mouth." It's stronger than we have it here in English. What Moses is saying is, "Shut your mouth, sit on the beach, and watch Daddy deliver. What's our job? To shut up, to sit there, to not do anything. You're just going to mess it up if you try to help. It's the Lord who brings salvation. He will work it for you today. The Lord will fight for you. You have only to be silent."

Now this passage, in addition to not just being about Israel and Egypt, is reflected in a bigger story in the Bible. Tell me if you can find the parallel figure here. Can you think of someone else in the Bible who, when he's a baby, has an evil king try to kill him? Can you think of someone else in the Bible who grows up to be a deliverer and bring his people out of slavery to an evil king known as the Devil and bring us into a salvific promised land? Yeah, Jesus. We really like him.

This passage is seen as the gospel of the Old Testament. In the same way if you ask me to explain one thing in the Bible, I'm going to tell you about Jesus, if you were to ask a Jew that before Christ, they would tell you the Exodus passage. "This is when God delivered us from our enemies at our worst and gave us a promised land, took us out of bondage." All of the Old Testament like that points to Jesus. These figures are actual figures, but they also point to Jesus.

Let's use Adam for an example. Adam sins; Jesus dies for sin. Adam's sin brings about death; Jesus is resurrected. Adam's sin brings about sickness; Jesus heals the sick. Adam's sin brings about demonic oppression; Jesus casts out demons. That's why Romans calls Jesus the last Adam. Or Israel... In the Old Testament, Israel is called God's son; Jesus is God's true Son. Israel has twelve tribes. How many disciples does Jesus take? Hmm. He's reconstituting Israel around himself.

In the Old Testament, you would offer sacrifices; Jesus becomes that sacrifice. In the Old Testament, you would go to the temple to get especially close to God. Although he's everywhere, you would especially go to the temple. Jesus says, "I'm the new temple. Destroy this temple; I'll raise it up in three days. You don't pray facing Jerusalem anymore; you pray facing me."

Or David and Goliath... Oh, we use that David and Goliath story out of context all the time, about how the little guy beats up the big guy. You're a basketball coach, and your team is about to play some really tough

team, and you're like, "Listen, we will slay this giant with smooth stones." We are not David in that story; we're the Israelites who are shaking in our boots.

What we need is a messiah king. *Messiah* means the anointed one. You would anoint kings. We need an anointed messiah king to come slay this giant we can't defeat so that we're not in bondage. It all points to Jesus. It's all about him. All of the promises of God find their "yes" in Christ. Jesus walks with his disciples after his resurrection and shows them how the whole Old Testament is about him. This verse, verse 14, is extremely important to me personally. Let me tell you a little bit about my background.

A few years ago, I was pastoring a church up in North Texas, about two hours north of here. Great church, sweet people for sure. About four months into my pastorate, I went through a horrible depression. My wife walks into my study where I'm supposed to be preparing a sermon, and I am lying in the fetal position, crying. She's like, "What is going on?" Severe depression, severe anxiety, severe thoughts of condemnation...

I wasn't eating. I was losing weight. We had to buy PowerBars so if I at least felt a little bit hungry, I could take something and throw it down real quick and not just wither away. I wasn't getting out of bed in the morning. I would just lie there for hours and weep. I mean, it was horrible, the worst time in my life for sure. I was under strong spiritual attack. I was having demonic nightmares. I had a dream that the Devil was yelling condemnations in my face. How about that? Terrifying. I was thinking thoughts of suicide daily.

Eventually, because things got so bad, I had to resign and move back to the Dallas area and get out of ministry just to get some help. I took a sales job in the Dallas area and moved back here just to get some help. I was a Christian, but I was not doing well. I got plugged in with a home group leader here at The Village (he doesn't lead a home group here anymore), a dear brother named Jerry Williams, who had gone through some severe anxiety and depression himself.

He met with me, and he went, "Listen, I'm not going to try to counsel you out of what you're going through, because you'll just reason your way around it. I just want you to come over to my house. We're going to worship the Lord together, and I'm going to pray for you, and that's all." I'm like, "Okay, that's kind of weird, but it's better than killing myself, so let's try it."

So I would go over to his house, and he would take his iPod, and he would plug it in. It would just be him, our wives, and me. He'd plug it in, and he would just play worship music. I would just sit there and cry for an hour, just sit there and cry the entire time. He would come and pray for me, and then I would leave. I would come back every week or every other week. He'd plug in his iPod, we'd play worship, I would sit there and cry, he would come lay hands on me and pray for me, and then I would leave.

Every time I would leave, I didn't have any answers to my questions. I didn't have these theological answers I was asking God to give me, thinking just those in and of themselves would be helpful. But when I left, even though I didn't have any answers, I felt a little bit more like the Lord loved me. After doing that for a year, I didn't want to kill myself anymore, which is a huge win. I'm here. So let me encourage you also. If you're struggling with suicidal thoughts, depression, and this kind of stuff, the Lord is faithful.

I've learned two things from this experience. The first one is the Lord will fight for you; you have only to be silent. I didn't do anything. I just sat there and cried, and the Lord just slowly keeps redeeming and digging up this sin, and digging up this pain, and taking that heavy yoke of Pharaoh off my shoulders. The second thing I learned was no matter how much I tried, I couldn't get out of the depression. No matter how much I prayed or asked God to kill me or read or talked to people, I couldn't get out of that pit.

What I learned is God didn't want me to get out of the pit, because if I got myself out of the pit, I would think it was because of me. What the Lord showed me is he loved me in the pit, that I don't have to come out of the pit, out of that depression, out of anxiety. He comes down in the pit *with* me. The Lord loves you in your depression. He loves you in your anxiety. He loves you in your stress. He loves you in your lust. He loves you in your pain. He loves you in those things.

I had to fall to the bottom of God's grace to learn there wasn't one. When I thought I had exhausted his grace, that I had surely worn it out with my many blasphemies, my many sins, my many failures and doubts, I would look up and there was still an ocean of it left. As I was sitting with Jerry, because of all my sin I was just waiting for God to backhand me, but he never did. He said, "I love you in your pain, in your depression, in your anxiety, in your hurt. I love you now at your worst. You have only to be silent; the Lord will fight for you."

There's one more verse I want to look at, and then we'll be done; verse 15. This actually is going to peek into the next paragraph. We won't go into the whole paragraph, but I just want to mention this first verse here. **"The LORD said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.'"** This is a strange, strange text, because it looks like God just rebuked Moses for crying out to him. It looks like he's saying, "Hey, don't ask me for help." God is not saying, "Don't ask me for help." He's not saying, "Don't cry out to me." He's not saying, "Don't ask me to fight for you," like he just said he would.

What he's saying to Moses in context is, "Walk in the freedom I've already given you. Now is the time for walking through the sea. It's not the time to sit there still on the beach. Walk in the freedom I've already given you. Don't just sit there and keep crying to me for salvation. I parted the sea. Raise your hands and

walk." What I have found is that most Christians, myself included, are waiting for a freedom they've already been given. We're carrying around broken chains.

Let's say you struggle with some type of sin, whatever the sin may be. You're probably waiting. "God, free me from this sin." I'm here to tell you you've already been freed if you're a Christian. You're not waiting to be free; you're learning to walk in it. You're not waiting for God to free you. He has already freed you. He who the Son sets free will be free indeed. Jesus came to set the captives free.

You're not waiting for freedom or deliverance; you've already been freed and delivered. You're learning how to walk in it. You're learning to believe it. God has said you're free, but we always wrestle. "Well, am I really free? I'm going to hang on to this over here." You *are* free. You're learning to believe it. The whole Christian life is learning to be what you are already. It takes a long time. Here's the thing. You're never going to fully get there on this side of eternity. You are going to grow and grow, and then you're going to die, but at least you can grow in the meantime.

For example, if you feel attacked spiritually, but you love Jesus and you've repented, you're not waiting for deliverance. Colossians says he delivered us from the domain of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Most Christians are waiting for a freedom we've already been given. It has been said the greatest trick the Devil ever pulled is he has all of the nonbelievers thinking they're okay and all of the believers thinking they're not okay. I think that's probably true. That seems to be pretty true.

What that means is this: Walk in what you are. Believe what God says about you is true, not how you feel about what God has said about you. Walk in what God has said about you being true. Let me give you an example. Let's say you struggle with (I'm just going to pick a few things) pornography. Maybe a better prayer for you, instead of saying, "God, I'm sorry; I'll never do it again," is, "Lord, you've already set me free from this, but for some reason I'm still walking in it. Help me believe what you've already said about me is true. I need your help to deliver me. I can't deliver myself. I cannot part my own seas."

Or maybe you're a woman who purges after meals, and you have these body image issues. Let me say this to you. Instead of saying, "God, I'm sorry; I'll do better," maybe you say, "Lord, you've already set me free from this, and you see me as beautiful. You're the one whose opinion counts. For some reason, I don't believe that, though, so help me believe what you've already said about me is true. It has already been done. The battle has already been fought. The war has been won. Help me now live in what I actually am."

For example, the Emancipation Proclamation goes out, and at that point, all of the slaves are legally free. What happens, though, all around the South the very next day? Every slave in the South continues to do

what they've always done, because they don't know they've been set free. It took finishing up a civil war and then reconstruction to actually make that a reality.

So here's what I'm here to say to you. You're free. Put down your tools and walk. You don't have to be a slave to sin anymore. The Bible teaches we died to sin. We're no longer slaves to sin. If you're a slave to anything now if you're a Christian, it's Jesus, which is great because he is far more loving and has a far better plan for you than you do. Let me end with one illustration, and then I want to ask you guys some questions to think about.

Imagine a guy who adopts a boy from a foster home. Now this dad is not loving. He didn't adopt this boy so he could care for him; he adopts this boy under false pretenses so he can abuse him. He is a wicked, wicked father. He never tells this boy he loves him. He hates this boy. He bought him so he could hurt him. He abuses him. He leaves bruises. He knocks out his teeth. He puts cigarettes out on him. One day this dad comes home drunk, kicks open the door, turns on the burner, grabs the boy's hand, and sticks it on the burner just to torment him.

This kid doesn't have a bed. He has to sleep in the corner of a room. He sleeps on the floor, and he doesn't sleep in pajamas; he just wears his school clothes. He doesn't have pajamas. His dad is not going to buy him new clothes. This dad doesn't feed this boy. This kid, when he's at school, has to borrow food from his friends and stick it in his pocket, so that way when he goes home, he can get at least a little bit of sustenance. This is a wicked, twisted, evil father who abuses and hates this boy.

Then one day, CPS takes this child away and puts him with a good father, a good family, a father who just goes up to the boy the first time he sees him and says, "I love you." The boy has never in his life heard, "I love you." The father buys him new clothes. The father cleans him up. The father loves him. He doesn't abuse this boy. He's a loving, good father. One day the father walks into the kid's bedroom where he's supposed to be sleeping, and the little boy is sleeping on the floor instead of in the bed.

The father goes up and goes, "You don't have to sleep on the floor anymore; you can sleep in the bed. That was your old family. This is a new family now. I love you." One day at the dinner table, there's all this food, and the little boy opens his jacket and starts eating what's in his pocket, and the dad says, "You don't have to do that anymore. We have a whole table full of food. You can have *my* food. I love you. You belong to a new family now."

If you are a Christian, that's your story. You're the little boy. The Bible teaches that because of sin, when we are born, we are born enemies of God, children of wrath. We belong to the Prince of the power of the air. That's the Devil. As soon as I was born, I was placed into the cold, icy red fingers of my father the Devil, and

he raised me to be like him. He raised me to hate God, he raised me to be selfish, and he abused me. The Devil hates you because you bear the image of God and he hates God.

When Jesus rescued me, I got a new Father who says, "Zach, I love you. Even when you mess up, I love you." The whole Christian life is learning to sleep in the bed. When we sin, we have an identity crisis. We forget for a second who we actually are in Christ. We forget we belong to a new family, and we start showing old family traits.

The whole Christian life is learning that we can eat at the table, that we can sleep in the bed. That's what we do when we sin. There are times when we learn to sleep more and more in the bed, but every once in a while we go back to the floor because we forget. So our loving, kind Father takes us, picks us up, puts us in bed, and tucks us in. We have a new Father now. Be what you are. Walk in the freedom God has given you.

If you don't take anything else away from this sermon, I want you to take away this. Ready? God is not like Pharaoh who demands you make bricks using less straw. He's the God who parts the sea to get you the heck out of Egypt. God is not like Pharaoh...dark, wicked, and oppressive. His yoke is easy; his burden is light. A bruised reed Jesus will not break, which means he's so gentle that if there is a piece of grass bent over and he walks by, it doesn't knock it off.

So if you are someone in here who's not a Christian today, let me just encourage you. There stands ready a father who wants to adopt you into his family. You can give up all your sin and all your pain and all your shame and all that weight you're carrying, and you can give that to King Jesus. By repenting and looking at Jesus, asking him to save you, saying, "I'm tired of carrying this sin. I hate it. Save me, Jesus..." By looking to him, you might move from Egypt to Israel. You might move from a bad family to a good family. "How do I do it?" Repent and ask Jesus to change you and save you. The Lord will fight for you.

So let me do this. If you don't mind, I'm going to ask you a few questions I just want you to think about. So if you'll bow your head and close your eyes. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand. I'm not going to ask you to come up here. I just want you to think about these questions and answer honestly. Don't give me the answer you think is true. I want you to answer honestly how you actually feel.

1. *How do you think God views you?* When God looks at you, how does he view you? Is he angry? Is he apathetic or just doesn't care? Is he far off? Is he frustrated? If you see him in one of those ways, maybe the good news for you is God smiles down on you and loves you at your worst, when you're mocking him by the sea.

2. *What battles do you need to give to the Lord and let him fight for you?* Something at your work? Something at home? Stress? Worry? Anxiety? Is there some type of sin you need to give to Jesus and say, "Jesus, I'm sick of playing with this. This hurts me. I'm done with this. Help me"?

3. *Do you live as though the battle has already been won?* Because it has. The Lord will fight your small battles, but *the* battle has also already been won.

4. *Where do you need to walk in the freedom you've been given, instead of thinking you are enslaved?* Let me pray for us.

Father, you are the best father. You are kind and gracious, and when I ask you for bread, you don't give me a stone. I just thank you for this time to just get to realize how great you are, that you're loving and kind, that you smile, that you're a God who laughs, and that you deliver people at their worst, that there are not (as one preacher has said) good people and bad people; there are bad people and Jesus.

I just pray you would overwhelm us right now with your love and grace, that you would send your Spirit and break chains in the name of Jesus, that people wouldn't carry around some of the weight they've been carrying, that they would just give that to you. I pray for those in here who are striving, that they would stop striving, because you're not Pharaoh, that they would rest by the sea and let you bring deliverance. We love you. We praise you. Who is like you, O God? It's in Jesus' (your Son's) name we pray, amen.