

Series: Questions

Title: Wherefore Criest Thou Unto Me?

Text: Exodus 14: 15

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There is a time to pray. Then there is a time to stop asking God and to go forward trusting the Lord. Does that statement surprise you? Turn to Exodus 14: 15. In our text, Moses prayed to the LORD.

Exodus 14:15: And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

The LORD told Moses, “You have been heard. Now, it is time to stop crying unto me, it is time to cry unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. It is time to put faith into action.”

Let’s get the context. You know it well.

First, the LORD had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt from Pharaoh and his taskmasters.

Likewise, every believer here tonight, has been redeemed out of bondage by the triune God of glory through our successful Savior: redeemed from the curse of the law, delivered from the dominion of our sin-nature in the new birth, and delivered us from Satan and his taskmasters.

Then instead of taking the children of Israel straight across the desert into Canaan, for their own good and his own glory, God led them through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.

Likewise, God has not taken us out of this world, or out of this body of death, but God has left us in this wilderness surrounded by our enemies, for our good and his glory. He shall keep his children from the evil: because Christ has paid the debt of justice for each of God’s elect, because God has given us eternal life when he called us to faith in Christ, because none are able to pluck one of his sheep from the hand of God our Father or from the hand of his Son Jesus Christ and because God has other sheep yet to be called and they too must hear his Voice.

Next, the LORD commanded Moses to camp in the place they were now in—a place where the children of Israel were hemmed in on all sides. Now, Pharaoh and his army are in hot pursuit and the children of Israel have no way of conquering Pharaoh or of delivering themselves through the Red Sea.

Likewise, our all-wise Father, often brings us into great trial where we have no way of conquering our enemy or of delivering ourselves through whatever obstacle he has placed before us. This is the way God continually brings us to the end of self; this is the way God continually reminds us salvation is of the LORD; this is the way God continually causes us to turn from self and cast all our care into his hand.

Yet, before this trial, the LORD clearly told Moses what he was about to do to Pharaoh and his army and why. Brethren, God has clearly told us as well and this is God’s purpose in the trials that you and I face.

Exodus 14: 3: For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They *are* entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. 4: And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that HE SHALL FOLLOW AFTER THEM; and I WILL BE HONOURED UPON PHARAOH, AND UPON ALL HIS HOST; THAT THE EGYPTIANS MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD.

Whatever enemy we face—God will be honored upon our enemies. God will make our enemy to know he is the LORD.

And they did so. Pharaoh made ready his chariot and took 600 choice chariots, along with all the chariots in Israel. He set captains over them, brought his horsemen, and his army, and overtook the children of Israel in this place by the Red Sea, just as God told Moses he would.

Exodus 14: 10: And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. 11: And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? 12: Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

Now, listen to this sure word, this promise from the LORD, spoken to the children of Israel, by his faithful servant Moses.

Exodus 14: 13 And Moses said unto the people, FEAR YE NOT, STAND STILL, and SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD, which HE WILL SHEW TO YOU TO DAY: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, YE SHALL see them again NO MORE FOR EVER. 14 The LORD SHALL FIGHT FOR YOU, and YE SHALL HOLD YOUR PEACE.

This message Moses delivered, was the same message which the LORD promised King Jehoshaphat and Judah, when they were being pursued by enemies:

2 Chronicles 20: 15:...Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's...17: Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

Moses delivered the first part of the message then Moses cried unto the LORD in his heart for further direction. And the LORD answered.

Exodus 14: 15: And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: 16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. 17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

Title: WHEREFORE CRIEST THOU UNTO ME?

Proposition: Now, I will clarify my opening statement. Men ought always to pray and faint not. But when God has opened the way and commanded us to go forward then it is time to stop asking God what we are to do and to go forward in faith, trusting that God shall deliver us as he promises he shall.

Divisions: 1) We will see what Moses must do himself; 2) What Moses must command the children to do and what they all must do; 3) What they all must trust the LORD to do.

I. WE SEE WHAT MOSES MUST DO HIMSELF

For now, God commands Moses to stop crying to the Lord, and cry unto the people. **“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” (v15)**

Heart Prayer

First, we have no recorded words that Moses prayed, but it is obvious from the LORD's answer to him, that Moses did cry unto the LORD.

True prayer is heart prayer. I am not suggesting that when we speak audibly we are not praying. But whether words are spoken or not, true prayer is heart prayer.

Illustration: Remember Hannah? 1 Samuel 1: 13 says, "Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." But the LORD heard her!

Until a sinner is born of the Spirit of God, until our conscious is purged with the blood of Christ and our bodies washed with pure water, so that we can approach God in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord in faith, we have not truly begun to pray. Concerning those whose heart was set on their idol God, the LORD said to Ezekiel,

Ezekiel 14: 3: Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?...7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: 8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel 20:31 For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.

Illustration: Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul)—"Behold, he prayeth!"

Believers Can Pray with Confidence

Every believer, by the grace of God unto us, can have confidence that he is welcome at all times to God's throne of grace because of the work of grace done for us so that God will accept us.

Hebrews 10: 19: Having THEREFORE, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.

Believer, we have liberty to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, because Christ has already shed his blood for each of his elect, perfecting us forever. Christ is the new and living Way, as opposed to the old covenant of works, which was full of dead sacrifices and dead works—he is the new and living Way.

Hebrews 10: 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God;

Christ our High Priest has already entered into God's presence for us making full atonement on behalf of each one for whom he died and is over the house of God, making intercession for us—that is why we can pray.

Hebrews 10: 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

We can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, because our hearts have already been sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies already washed with pure water in effectual grace by God the Holy Spirit through the pure word of the gospel.

Hebrews 10: 23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

Just as we can approach God assured God will receive us, we can hold fast and serve God in faith without wavering—because God is faithful that promises to honor those who honor his Son. So Moses prayer was heart prayer. Moses was answered in his silent prayer.

The LORD Will Be Enquired Of

The second thing we see is that though Moses had been assured beforehand by the LORD that the LORD would deliver them. Yet Moses still asked the LORD what to do. We ought always ask the LORD for direction. The Lord promised a blessing to his people in Ezekiel, but he said,

Ezekiel 36: 37 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Luke 18: 1: And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

For that reason alone, it does not appear that God was displeased with Moses for asking the LORD's direction. Moses believed the LORD's promise to deliver. The LORD's answer was confirmation to Moses in the heart that the LORD would do what Moses believed he would do. The LORD's answer was quick because there was work to be done right away.

Application: Remember brethren, 1) Prayer is heard by the Lord though it be silent. It is better to pray from the heart with no words than to pray with eloquent words and no heart. Our confidence for approaching God in prayer is Christ our great High Priest in whom we have been made righteous, accepted in the Beloved. 2) Though we have God's promise to deliver, we ought always ask the LORD to deliver according to that promise. 3) But when God has opened the way and then it is time to stop asking God what we are to do and to go forward in faith, trusting that God shall deliver us as he promises he shall. I have seen situations before where instead of moving forward, men kept saying, "Well, let's pray about it." We are to never use prayer as an excuse for unbelief.

II. WE SEE WHAT MOSES MUST TELL ISRAEL TO DO

The LORD tells Moses to, "**speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.**" (v14) The things Moses had already spoken to them are our instruction in every time of trial.

Fear Not

First, Moses said, "**Fear ye not.**" (v13) We are commanded to fear the LORD but when it comes to our enemies—men especially—we are commanded to "fear not." To do so is to give men glory rather than giving our sovereign God his rightful glory.

Luke 12: 4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Stand Still

When Moses told them to "**stand still**" it does not necessarily mean we are not to move. (v13) Even when they go forward they will be standing still. We stand still when we cease from all self-confidence and trust Christ.

Isaiah 30:7: For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to SIT STILL....15: For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

See the Salvation of the LORD

Also, Moses told the children of Israel, **“See the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.”** (v13)

If we would see the salvation of the LORD then we must look to him.

Isaiah 45: 21:...there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

When we look to the LORD we see he purposed the salvation of his people from eternity! He purchased the salvation of his people on the cross! The only way we look is because he performs salvation in irresistible grace effectually turning us to him. We have seen his salvation in preserving us thus far! And we have the testimony of many witnesses together with his promise! He promises us salvation unto the end when he shall resurrect us into glory—not one shall be lost.

Hold Your Peace

Then Moses told them, **“The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”** (v14) The children of Israel were crying aloud—murmuring against Moses. They had just been delivered from Egypt. In Egypt they saw the plagues wherein God put a difference between them and the Egyptians. God’s grace is particular, electing grace. They saw that God provided them a lamb and passed over their first born because their firstborn died in a substitute. Then they saw the provision God made in spoiling the Egyptians and providing so much substance for them for their journey.

When we face trials, we sometimes speak like we never even heard of the sovereign God of all grace. That is what we are in our flesh. O, Lord, keep us! Make us have this confidence:

Philippians 1:6: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13: 5:...he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Go Forward

Now, the LORD commands Moses, **“speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”** (v15) God has promised all this great salvation, that he shall deliver them, that he shall honor himself in the destruction of every enemy. But if they do not go forward, they will never see it. That is true of us in all our trials.

We may say we fear God, not men; we may say we are standing still—looking only to Christ; we may say we have seen and believe we shall see the salvation of the Lord; we may say we believe the LORD shall fight for us; but how will we prove it? We will prove it by going forward. This applies to whatever our current situation.

Take for instance, the poor sinner who has first been persuaded by the grace of God that Christ is All: that Christ has by himself purged your sins, that it is God that justified you, that you have been made the righteousness of God in him. That believers public act of obedience which will prove his faith is by going forward in a public confession of him.

Or take a believer like Moses. God promised to Moses.

Exodus 3:12: And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

In the beginning, when God gave that promise to Moses, Moses was in Mt. Horeb, Mt. Sinai. Now, Moses has brought forth the children of Israel out of Egypt and he stands here with the Red Sea between Moses and that mountain. He has God's promise that God will be with him and that he and the children of Israel shall serve God upon that mountain. But to get to that mountain, to prove he believes God, Moses has to go forward.

James 2:21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?...²⁵ Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

They believed God is able. Do we believe God is able? The LORD is faithful. He has made good on every promise to every saint:

- The LORD made same promise to Joshua—Joshua 1:5: There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.
- He made the same promise to Gideon—Judges 6:16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.
- The LORD made the same promise to David and Solomon—1 Chronicles 28:20: And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

Our faithful God and Savior made good on his promise! The LORD has made the same promise to us in our hearts, brethren.

Application: When it came time for Christ to go to the cross. Some Greeks wanted to see the Lord Jesus. They came to his disciples. At the time, the Pharisee's were seeking to kill Christ and Lazarus and anyone connected with him. His disciple did not want their Savior to die, nor did they want to suffer. So the Lord Jesus said this,

John 12: 27: Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

The Lord Jesus said that the Father did not speak this for his sake but for their sakes. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus was teaching his disciples?

John 12: 24: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

The trial, the cross, is not meant to be easy or else it would not be called a trial, a cross. Trials are meant for us to go forward, trusting the Lord, that is why they are called a trial of faith. But if we will see the salvation accomplished for us by the Lord, if we are to see that the battles is not ours, but the Lords, then we must go forward. Our assurance is God's word.

III. WE SEE WHAT THEY ALL MUST TRUST GOD TO DO

We Must Trust the LORD to Dry Up the Sea

Our gracious LORD promises, **“But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.” (v16)**

This is that rod which Moses used to smite the rock from which the living water came out—a picture of the rod of the law, of holy justice satisfied in Christ our Substitute. The chastisement of our peace was upon Christ Jesus and with his stripes all those for whom he died are healed. The satisfaction of justice, the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus, demands his children be saved out of the hands of the enemy. Christ’s finished work makes us to cross the sea of wrath on dry ground.

This rod represents the preaching of that gospel. All Moses is to do is hold up that rod. God will work grace in the hearts of his people through the good news of the gospel. And God will use this same gospel rod to destroy his enemies.

This is the way the Lord humble us. We must trust the Lord to do it all.

Isaiah 63: 13: That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble?
14 As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

We Must Trust the LORD to Destroy All Our Enemies

The Lord promised, **“And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.” (vv17-18)**

Christ Jesus has destroyed our enemies. He put away the sin of his people, fulfilled the law on our behalf. The Spirit has created us anew. God shall deliver us—the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. This sea pictures baptism, it pictures the work done on the cross, it pictures all our trials, and it pictures that last enemy which shall be destroyed which is death.

We Must Trust the LORD to Give Us Light and Protection

God promises, **“And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.” (vv19-20)**

God promises to effectually give his children Light and protection. The pillar of the cloud is Christ Jesus—blinding the enemy but giving Light to his children. Our Lord promises us we shall have Light from him. And he promises to protect us.

The Children Obeyed

The children obeyed, trusting the LORD. **“And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.” (v22)** This is a type of faith and of submission to Christ in believer’s baptism (1 Cor 10: 1-2).

Romans 6:4: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5: For if we have been

planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

God Fulfilled Every Word

God did exactly as he said he would. You can read it at your leisure Exodus 14: 23-29. But see the effectual work of God's grace pictured here.

Exodus 14: 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. 31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

Application: This is what the Lord works in his child from the first hour and through this whole life of faith. When he first makes us to see our sin and we are fearful and we begin to cry unto the Lord, the Lord speaks into the heart and says, "Fear not, stand still, see the salvation of the LORD, hold your peace, and go forward to lay hold of Christ." When the Spirit works that effectually in our hearts through faith we "see the great work which the LORD did, we fear the LORD, and believe the LORD and believe his servant's gospel." And this is what the LORD continues to do for the believer throughout our life. This is how he grows us in grace and knowledge of him. He is preparing us for that last trial when we shall face death. We have as much strength now as we will in that trial: none in ourselves but all strength in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let's hear the LORD speak to Moses one more time, "**And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.**" (Ex 14: 15)

Amen!