

## The Way Exodus 14

When, in Mark 10, the rich young ruler asked Jesus,

*"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* Jesus first asked him why he called him good, because no one is good but God (18).

Then he reminded him about the Ten Commandments, to which the young man said, *"...all these I have kept from my youth"* (20).

Then Jesus said, *"You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me"* (21).

Luke tells us the young man was *"Disheartened by the saying, he went away very sorrowful, for he had great possessions"* (22).

I think the rich young ruler missed the point. What Jesus encouraged him to do had nothing to do with his possessions but following Christ. The issue was not wealth but self and Jesus. And in the end of that conversation, the young man demonstrated that he loved himself more than Jesus and, as such, did not follow him.

The writer of Hebrews probably did not have had that text in mind when he wrote his encouragement, but he emotes the same sentiment when he says,

*"...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus..."* (Hb 12:1-2a).

As you've already read in Exodus 14:11-12, Israel, like the rich young ruler, often preferred the riches of Egypt to following God in the wilderness. This is the same struggle we face and I am hoping the sermon today encourages you to follow Jesus *"through many dangers, toils and snares"* (John Newton in *Amazing Grace*).

Speaking of John Newton, he and Charles Simeon, the pastor at Trinity Church in Cambridge, England, were in a missionary society together intended to promote global missions. In 1831, when Simeon was 71 years old, he had pastored the Trinity Church for 49 years when his friend, Joseph Gurney asked him how he had endured the persecution and prejudice of pastoring a church that did not want him because they wanted another man, but a Bishop had nonetheless appointed him to the church. Simeon replied,

*My dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear the pricking of my legs. Let us rejoice in the remembrance that our holy Head has surmounted all His suffering and triumphed over death. Let us follow Him patiently; we shall soon be partakers of His victory"*  
(H.C.G. Moule, *Charles Simeon*, London: InterVarsity, 1948, 155f.).

In much the same way, I want to say to Israel, "Hold on. Be patient. Read *Philippians 1:6*, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" and trust God.

I want to say that to me also...and to you, which brings us to our text.

### **First: The Way God Led Israel**

13:17 - *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near.*

**Map 1** – Straight across the Sinai Peninsula

- (That's the route I want!)

13:20 - *And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.*

14:1 - *Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>"Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea.*

**Map 2** – Camping at Succoth and not crossing above the Red Sea

- (No one votes for this way)

And yet....

13:21 - *...the LORD went before them...*

14:1 - *Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>"Tell the people of Israel to turn back*

### **Second: The Reason God Led Them That Way**

14:3-4 - *For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' <sup>4</sup> And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD."*

We often hear about glorifying the Lord or the Lord getting glory and we often, as you might think from this passage, that God's glory and my good are different things. Indeed, they often appear to be different things.

*God in seeking his glory, seeks the good of his creatures...And in communicating his fulness for them, he does it for himself; because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing, but the emanation and expression of Gods' glory: God, in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks himself: and in seeking himself, i.e. himself diffused and expressed, (which he delights in, as he delights in his own beauty and fulness,) he seeks their glory and happiness.*

*A Dissertation Concerning The End for Which God Created the World, in The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, reprinted from an 1834 edition), 105.*

Whaaaaaat?

**Isaiah 61:1-3** (Luke 4:16-19) explains it well – *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup> to grant to those who mourn in Zion — to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*

The glory of God is seen in giving joy to his people. His people's joy is his glory. Moses reminded God of this when God thought about destroying Israel in the wilderness.

**Exodus 32:12a-14** – *Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. <sup>13</sup> Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" <sup>14</sup> And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.*

How does God glorify himself? By putting everything back, better.

Let's take it out of the global realm and into the personal realm.

a) God created humans, *imago dei*.

This image grants inherent, dignity, worth and purpose.

b) The Fall marred that image, making us less human than God created or intended.

Adam and Eve broke God's law and the guilt, as well as the dysfunction, of their trespass is handed down from generation to generation through our DNA. Our only hope is to be uprooted from our physical parents and given a new lineage.

By his death, Jesus became new life for those who trust in him.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.<sup>[b]</sup> The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

c) Sanctification progressively restores that image.

2 Peter 3:18 - *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

So God often leads us difficult ways but always for our good which is to his glory.

John 17:12 – (Jesus's Last Supper prayer) - While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost.

d) Only glorification, when we see Jesus face to face will wholly transform us into God' image

### **Third: How is This Way, the Best Way?**

If God's glory is synonymous with our best interests, how is this in Israel's best interests?

13:4 - *And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." And they did so.*

This is how it is best for Israel –

- a) Physical salvation - 30 – *Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians...*
- b) Faith building - 31 – *Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD...*

That faith-moment is going to be essential because the wilderness wanderings will deplete them of faith.

- c) Door opening

Joshua 2:9-11 – (Rahab to spies) *I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. <sup>10</sup> For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. <sup>11</sup> And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.*

(You can find a lot of other reasons)

#### **Fourth: Jesus and the Way**

Remember that Christian theology is practical theology. Behind the deep truths of Christianity lies rationale for life. EX: The Trinity is basis for

- Time: past, present, and future
- Matter: solid, gas, and liquid
- Space: Height, length, and depth

For a good part of their journey, God led Israel to use the King's Highway, (marked in red on the map) a Near East trade route connecting Africa with Mesopotamia. It ran across Egypt through the Sinai to Aqaba in Jordan and then turned north.

**Map 3** – The King's Highway (See Numbers 20:17; 21:22)

As you know, we've been looking for Jesus in the Old Testament. According to his own words, he is there and seeing him prepares us to know and trust him when we meet him in the New Testament.

Here's the point. God led Israel one and one way only through the wilderness because it was in their best interests. It was the best way to go. But, as we read the OT, God is also preparing our hearts for the arrival of Jesus, who, when he arrives will make this audacious statement.

**John 14:6 – *I am the way, the truth and the life.***

Just as Israel's salvation was dependent on following the 'cloud by day and fire by night,' representations of Jesus, so our salvation is dependent on following the way.

**Acts 9:1-2 – *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.***

**Acts 16:16-17 – (Possessed girl following Paul) *As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."***

**Acts 19:23 – (in Ephesus) – *About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.***

**Acts 22:4 – (Paul preaching in Jerusalem) *I persecuted this Way to the death...***

In other words, following Jesus is synonymous with 'the way.' But Jesus tells us that he, himself, is 'the way.'

### **Conclusion:**

*In shady, green pastures so rich and so sweet  
God leads His dear children along  
Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet  
God leads His dear children along*

***Some through the water, some through the flood  
Some through the fire, but all through the blood  
And some through great sorrow, but God gives the song  
In the night season and all the day long***

*Sometimes on the mount where the sun shines so bright  
 God leads His dear children along  
 Sometimes in the valley, in darkest of night  
 God leads His dear children along*

*Though sorrows befall us and Satan oppose  
 God leads His dear children along  
 Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes  
 God leads His dear children along*

*Some through the waters, some through the flood  
 Some through the fire, but all through the blood  
 Some through great sorrow, but God gives the song  
 In the night season and all the day long*

- **G.A. Young**

We have a universally human problem with no universally human solution. There is one way and only one way to God and it is the way he has provided.

*Matthew 7:13-14 - Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*

### **Community Groups:**

- 1 – Using the maps, trace Israel’s desired route versus the route God actually took them.
- 2 – According to 13:17, why did God initially take Israel the long way?
- 3 – Why did God tell Israel not to go forward into the wilderness but to “turn back” and camp on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea?
- 4 – According to 14:3-4, why does God direct Israel to camp at Pi-hahiroth?
- 5 – Work your way through the Edwards quote to ensure everyone understands it.
- 6 – Read Isaiah 61:1-3. How does our good lead to God’s glory or glorify God?
- 7 – Talk about being made human, losing God’s image, and becoming human again
- 8 – Looking at the sermon notes, how was the ‘long way’ the best way?
- 9 – Review the ‘Way’ passages in the New Testament and discuss how Jesus is the way.
- 10 – How does the way God led Israel through the wilderness point to Jesus?

### Daily Devotion:

**Monday, Jul 3<sup>rd</sup>.** Read Mark 10:27-22 & 12:28-30. (In the upcoming series on the Ten Commandments we will see how Jesus fulfills them all and each of them point to Him). How does Jesus summarize the Ten Commandments? What does the rich young ruler's response say about whether he really kept the commandments? What does it say about him? What does it say about Jesus? What impediments get between you and Jesus, i.e., take you out of the way of following him? How/when will you repent (make a course correction to get back in 'the way?')

**Tuesday, Jul 4<sup>th</sup>.** Read Ex 13:20 & 14:1. What are the various reasons why God led Israel the long way through the Sinai Peninsula? How was it for their good? What trials/heartaches can you recall that ultimately ended up good or in retrospect, you can now see were for your good? Did one event prepare you for the next? Can you now see these events as faith building/sanctifying moments? How should this change the way you now interact with an interpret trials? If it has not, consider thinking on previous trials and God's faithfulness, as you encounter new trials.

**Wednesday, Jul 5<sup>th</sup>.** Read Isaiah 61:3 & Luke 4:16-19. In these verses, what does God promise to do through Jesus? As you contemplate Jesus in the Gospels, how did he do this good to people? Think about God's goodness to Israel in the wilderness (cloud, fire, manna, water out of a rock, etc). How, according to Moses (Ex 32:12a-14) would destroying Israel in the wilderness tarnish God's glory? How does doing you good, glorify God? This is what it means to say that 'God is our greatest good.' Thus, there is no contradiction between your good and God's glory. God's glory is always good for us.

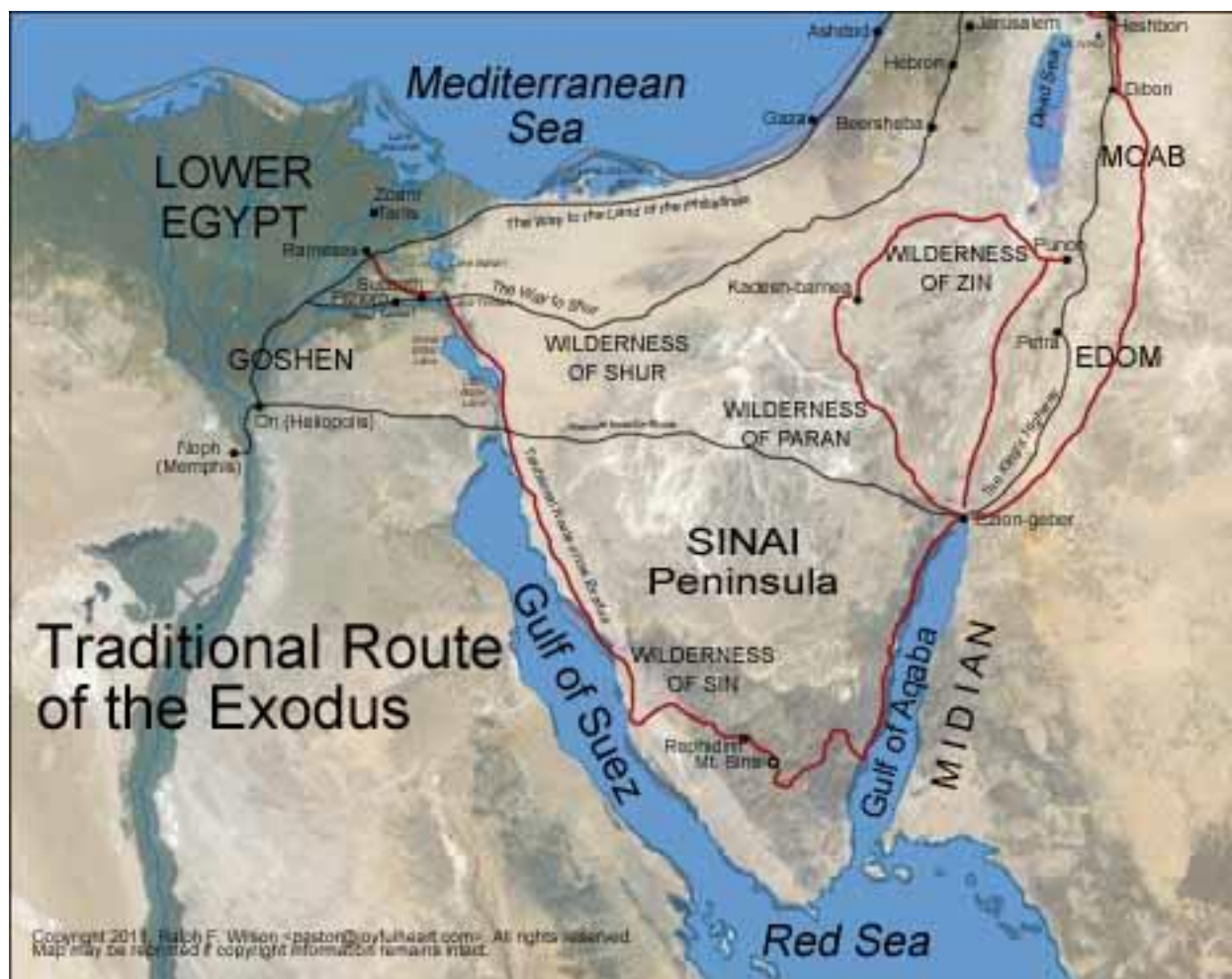
**Thursday, Jul 6<sup>th</sup>.** Read Gen 1:26-27. God's image – *imago dei* – gives every human being dignity, worth and purpose. We don't need people or accomplishments or things to do this for us. It is inherent within us. How does pursuing these things (when they are already ours by God's image) move us away from God? Where in the world do you see people being denied dignity, worth or purpose? How are you reminding yourself of these truths? How are you reminding people of these blessings in God? Who, in your life, demonstrates a lack of dignity, worth or value and how will you share this truth with them?

**Friday, Jul 7<sup>th</sup>.** Read John 14:6. How does God's wilderness leading of Israel illustrate the importance of following Jesus as the Way? How does this encourage your obedience to some of Jesus's more hard commands; to love, to forgive, etc. What do you find hard about following Jesus? Is there any place in your physical, emotional, mental, life you are



not following Jesus? Knowing the benefit of doing so, what will you / how will you repent of this and get back on 'the Way' following Jesus?

**Three maps follow -**



## 2. Israel's Exodus from Egypt and Entry into Canaan



