

The Third Part in the Series
Exodus: Let My People Go!
“Stop Trying and Start Trusting”
(Ex 14:1–29)

Picture yourself on a Delta flight and when the 757 begins taxiing down the runway you begin flapping your arms. The flight attendant comes along and says, “What in the world are you doing?” You say, “I’m helping this 757 get off the ground!” She says, “Um, you really don’t have to do that.” You shoot back, “Yes I do! I’m committed to making this work!” She says, “Trust me, you can just sit back and relax. This plane will take off without your help.” “No!” you protest, “I’ve got to help the pilot get this plane off the ground!” Your arms become tired until they just can’t flap anymore. How smart is that? *It’s time to stop trying and start trusting.*

That’s the truth of the day. *Stop trying and start trusting.* We’re in a series on the book of Exodus called *Let My People Go!* It’s a phrase that appears seven times in Exodus and here in chapter 14 finally, *finally*, Pharaoh let’s God’s people go!

But then it dawns on Pharaoh that by allowing the Israelite slaves to escape, he has destroyed Egypt’s economy. The only logical thing to do is to go after the Israelites and bring them back! So the ancient world’s most powerful army is now after Israel. What does God teach us through these exciting events in Exodus 14? *Stop trying and start trusting.*

Here’s the dilemma: The Israelites are surrounded. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ²“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.” (Ex 14:1–2).

This is one of the most alarming commands in the Bible! The Israelites have left Egypt and then God tells them to turn **back!** *Are you kidding me?* Freedom is **out** of Egypt and God is now telling His people to turn **back** to Egypt? Why does God do that? He wants Israel to stop trying and start trusting.

You’ve been there, haven’t you? With your back against the wall; with your dreams crushed; with your broken heart in your hand. We say, “God, it was going so good! What’s going on? Why do I have to turn back?” You might be elected as president of Russia. You might discover a way to email pizza and become a billionaire. Pigs might fly. A kangaroo might swim. Men might surrender the remote control. It’s not likely, but all of this is possible. What isn’t possible, though, is a problem-free life.

Sometimes God is behind the problem! Sometimes God is the one who brings us to the end of our rope where we are stuck and trapped—just like Israel—with no way out. Why does God do that? “and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ex 14:4). God knows exactly what He’s doing. He’s orchestrating our lives so that when we are delivered He gets the glory and we don’t!

Pharaoh saw Moses and the Israelites pinned in by the wilderness, lost and confused, stuck and trapped. “Pharaoh took six hundred (of the best) chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.” (Ex 14:7).

Chariots were like the B-1 Bombers of ancient Egypt. They were awesome. The Egyptian chariots are mobile strike forces for shooting arrows. Bombs away!

Pharaoh has 600 of these choice chariots. How many choice chariots does Israel have? Zero! Israel’s back is against the Red Sea. They are facing certain destruction. There isn’t a thing they can do about it! That’s the dilemma.

Can’t you just imagine Moses asking God, “Why is this happening?” The answer? *So the people stop trying and start trusting.*

Jesus knows all about this kind of dilemma—*does He ever!* Jesus knows all about dead ends. The path to the cross led him before Caiaphas, the high priest. It led Him before Pilate, who sent Him to Herod, who sent Jesus back to Pilate. Christ’s path then led him before soldiers who whipped Him, mocked Him, and spit on Him. The path ended at a dead end called Calvary. Jesus knows. Oh, Jesus knows all about dead ends.

The decree, just stay calm. Moses says, “Don’t be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm” (Ex 14:13–14). Just stay calm! What a decree! It means that we can stop flapping our arms. We can stop helping God. We can sit back and let God do the heavy lifting. How so? “The LORD himself will fight for you!”

Imagine two cooking bowls. One contains fresh, clean water. The second contains battery acid. Take an apple and cut it in half. Place half of the apple in the bowl of clean water. Place the other half in the bowl of battery acid. Leave each in its respective bowl for five minutes, and pull out the two halves. Which one will you eat?

Our mind is the apple. God’s Word is good water. Problems are the battery acid. If you let your mind soak in your problems, they will eventually corrode your brain and corrupt your thoughts. But let your mind soak in God’s

Word and God will preserve and refresh your mind. What is God's Word for us today? "Just stay calm!"

But we ask, "What if?" "What if I lose my job? What if my wife's cancer returns? What if my boyfriend dumps me? What if one of my children is in an accident and is paralyzed, or worse yet, killed?" God's decree calls us to replace "what if" with his Word, "Just stay calm."

Now on to the next scene: Deliverance comes in the morning. This is one of the *greatest* scenes in the Bible. Moses lifts his staff. The Red Sea parts. Israelites walk through on dry ground. Pharaoh and his army follow. The Red Sea comes crashing down on them.

And when did this happen? "In the morning Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the LORD swept them into the sea" (Ex 14:27 alternate translation). When did God finally save His people from their long night in Egypt? *In the morning*. When does Psalm 46:5 say God delivers? *In the morning*. When did Jesus rise again? *In the morning*. When does God deliver us from the long nights of life? According to Lamentations 3:23 his mercies are new every morning. And what is the last name the Bible gives Jesus found in the book of Revelation? The bright Morning Star. Psalm 30:5, "Weeping endures for a night, but joy (Joy!) comes *in the morning*."

Are you feeling stuck? Trapped? Pinned against the wall? Are you afraid that the depression will never lift? That the yelling will never stop? That the tension will never ease? That the emptiness will never leave? Are you wondering, "Will this pain ever stop? Will things ever get better?"

Exodus 14 announces that ***your*** battle is ***God's*** battle. And understand this: God has never lost a battle! *God has never lost one single, solitary battle!* Not with Pharaoh. Not with sin. Not with Satan. And not with death. The outcome is inevitable. The victory is assured. The last chapter has already been written!

It's time to stop trying and start trusting. The plane will take off without our help. God has it all under control. So we can stop flapping our arms! Moses puts it this way, "Just stay calm." Amen.